

## Seton Hall University eRepository @ Seton Hall

---

Seton Hall University Dissertations and Theses  
(ETDs)

Seton Hall University Dissertations and Theses

---

2006

# Historic House Museum or Grandma's Attic: The Value of a Collections Planning Guide for a Historic House Museum

Georgia Westerweller Bonilla

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarship.shu.edu/dissertations>

 Part of the [American Studies Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Bonilla, Georgia Westerweller, "Historic House Museum or Grandma's Attic: The Value of a Collections Planning Guide for a Historic House Museum" (2006). *Seton Hall University Dissertations and Theses (ETDs)*. 868.  
<https://scholarship.shu.edu/dissertations/868>

**HISTORIC HOUSE MUSEUM OR GRANDMA'S ATTIC**

**The Value of a Collections Planning Guide  
For a Historic House Museum Collection**

**by**

**Georgia Westerweller Bonilla**

**Jurgen Heinrichs, Ph.D., Advisor**

**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of**

**Master of Arts in Museum Professions  
Seton Hall University**

**May 2006**

## Abstract

*The sense of the meaning, or significance, of history and place is often obscured by preservation when it focuses on preserving old things without asking what they mean.*  
Jack D. Elliott, Jr.

A visit to a historic house museum can be either an exciting step back in time or a waste of time. Much of what the visitor takes away from the experience itself depends on the importance of the historic accuracy of the story, the interpretation, and the relevance of the collection. Why do some historic house museums fail to meet this goal? This is a complex question unique to historic house museums, involving all aspects of the operation of the house, museum, collection, finances, and educational integrity. The museum may be historic; but the methods used to relate the story, to control the relevancy of collection contents, and to operate efficiently must be updated.

The main focus of this thesis is how to improve the intellectual framework of historic house collections, contents, and stewardship. What are the consequences to collections as a result of the problematic situation of museums with limited funds and a continuous struggle to survive? Which issues are the result of outside influences and which issues are generated by internal difficulties, attitudes, and lack of knowledge?

The American Association of Museums published a Collections Planning Guide that can be of great value to the historic house museum. This Guide gives clear directives for collection contents. This thesis will discuss how a historic house museum can turn a Grandma's attic collection of objects into a historically accurate museum collection that offers visitors a quality educational experience.

Dedication:

To Barbara Cate, who believed in me and gave me the opportunity.  
To Ronni Seltzer, who guides me on my journey from caterpillar to butterfly.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Without the knowledge and guidance given to me by the professors in the Museum Arts Professions Department, I would not have completed this career change. My life has been enriched with a new appreciation for learning and wonderful memories of Paris and Rome. Special acknowledgement is given to Prof. Heinrichs for his patience, understanding, guidance, his gentle pushes to complete this thesis and to return to my cultural roots. I kept my word; I would not disappoint either of us.

To my sons, Steve and Doug, thanks for your love, your patience, help and support and for learning when to walk ahead of me, beside me, or in back of me when challenges overwhelm me.

To Susi and Tracy, who always understand, I love you both. Thanks for being my personal Help Desk when I have computer problems.

To Poppa, who watches over me—I finally did it!

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	i
Dedication	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of Contents	iv
 INTRODUCTION	 1
 CHAPTER 1 A Question of Numbers	 7
 CHAPTER 2 Historic Preservation History	 10
 CHAPTER 3 Indiscriminate Preservation	 14
 CHAPTER 4 The Role of Museum Organizations	 18
 CHAPTER 5 Government Funding or Private Funding	 21
 CHAPTER 6 The Collection Planning Guide	 25
 CHAPTER 7 Advantages of Collection Planning	 28
 CHAPTER 8 External Influences Cause Education Changes	 34
 CHAPTER 9 Difficult Collection Decisions	 42
 CHAPTER 10 Collections Planning Guide or Historic Furnishing Plan	 46

CHAPTER 11	49
Looking Forward	
CONCLUSION	53
BIBLIOGRAPY	
APPENDICES	
A. Photographs of Damage from Katrina	
B. Sample of Outline for Collections Planning Guide	
C. Selected pages from ICCROM Team Project	
D. Supporting Statistical Material	

## INTRODUCTION

Most large art and history museums have standardized, well-written documents addressing the issues relative to the mission of the museum, its operation and the policy and procedures that pertain to the integrity of the collection, its content and its care. These institutions employ trained professionals to keep their museums living entities while keeping true to the mission statement, educational programs, collection research and interpretation, along with collection care and conservation.

As museums began to standardize procedures, work in the museum field also became more specialized. The need for more formal education, customized to the field of museum arts was needed. Colleges and universities recognized the need for this new area of academic focus and began to offer major areas of study in all aspects of museum operations. In 1906, the museums formed the American Association of Museums (AAM). This is a national organization that serves all areas of the museum community. Acting as a resource for museums, the AAM is continually improving on or composing new guides to aid in maintaining museum excellence. Since its inception, the AAM offers educational programs, conferences and seminars in all areas of the museum profession. The AAM developed and oversees an Accreditation Program to encourage museums to strive for excellence in museum standards and practices. Receiving designation as an AAM accredited museum means that the institution has complied with all standards and requirements set forth by the AAM.

The AAM Accreditation Program is voluntary but many museums use the accreditation standards as a benchmark to compare practices and standards used in their institutions. In order for a museum to participate in the Accreditation Program, it must



meet certain criteria. Among other criteria, the museum must have been open for at least two years, have a full-time director, have a formal and appropriate program of documentation in place which provides for collection care, and the use of collections and/or objects. The museum should have accessioned 80 percent of its permanent collection and have the financial resources sufficient to operate effectively. Museums applying for the Accreditation Program must also show legal ownership of objects in the collection and that the collections and exhibitions are appropriate to a museum's mission statement. The AAM guidelines that are specific to collections stewardship require a museum practice careful, sound, and responsible management of collections entrusted to its care. The possession of a collection incurs legal, social, and ethical obligations to provide proper physical storage, management, and care for the collections and associated documentation, as well as proper intellectual control (AAM, January 2005).

The current AAM Accreditation Program Annual Statistics At-A-Glance information was released in January 2006 and revealed that in the category of historic house museum or site only seven percent of museum had achieved accreditation. This statistic alone did not initiate any studies as to why there are so few accredited historic house museums. The museum community soon became aware of the desperate need for education and guidance in proper museum protocols and practices that existed in the historic house museum field.

The newest AAM publication is the Guide to Collections Planning. The focus of this thesis is on the value a Collections Planning document will have to the historic house museum community. During a personal interview in November 2005, with Rebecca Buck, Registrar at the Newark Museum in New Jersey, she emphasized that a Collection

Planning Guide should be composed by all museums, especially museums having no museum professional on staff. In the ideal, she stressed writing this guide as soon as the museum mission statement has been determined. Ms. Buck was one of the facilitators for the group whose discussions resulted in this new museum publication. In order to understand the impact and value a Collections Planning Guide can have on historic house museums, it is necessary to explore the unique situations and difficulties that these institutions encounter and the subsequent problems that arise in the area of collection stewardship.

This thesis will examine the information contained in the contents of the AAM Collections Planning Guide and the value that can be provided to a historic house museum, especially in evaluating the collection contents to prevent any resemblance of the collection to the assorted objects found in grandma's attic. To further the understanding of the current situation of historic house museums specific questions and common issues will be addressed. What criteria should be used to keep a collection true to the mission statement and historic timeline represented by the historic house? Have fluctuations in the historic preservation movement had an impact on these historic American treasures? Questions have been raised among the museum community as to the issue of redundancy in preserving every historic building. What are the issues that accompany the alternative use theory? What will be historically preserved to represent the history of the last century?

Many of the difficulties historic house museums encounter are unique to this particular segment of the museum community. Finding sufficient operating capital with less dependence on the government for funds, adjusting to the museum professionalism

movement, the difficulty of an all volunteer staff, the question of preservation redundancy, the challenge of providing visitors an accurate historic interpretation, and improvements in collection stewardship are just some of the issues facing the groups who have assumed the responsibilities for the operation of historic house museums. The AAM publication, *Guide to Collections Planning*, is an excellent beginning tool to help historic house museums attain professionalism in collections stewardship. It may also provide guidance or solutions for some of the other problems that are commonplace in these museums. However, careful scrutiny must focus on the museum operation and communication within the organization to identify the situations that are created internally and perpetuated within the organization. The incorporation of established principals of organizational communication and business management into historic house museum operations should be encouraged. These business techniques when applied to non-profit organizations and can result in improved accountability and more efficient use of resources.

Recent attention to historic house museums and their special niche in the heritage of America was the unfortunate result of a natural disaster, Hurricane Katrina. As the storm unleashed its force, it ravaged some of the most valuable and vulnerable museums in our country, the historic house. The enormity and devastation of this disaster in the South called the museum community immediately into action. The hurricane's force damaged or leveled many of the South's finest examples of plantation architecture including the collections held by these houses. Decorative arts objects, furniture, machinery and other collectibles passed down through the generations were suddenly lost in the floods that leveled buildings and swept away all that resisted its path.

Many lives were lost and the first priority was, of course, to rescue survivors of this natural disaster. Katrina's fury caused many residents to lose their homes or to find them uninhabitable. Families found themselves separated or relocated to other areas to start over again. Amid the ruins and rubble, volunteers from the museum community realized that it, too, had suffered a severe impact due to the loss or the damage of many fine historic houses that graced Southern landscapes. These were magnificent examples of Southern architecture, along with its historic collections representing a silent past had now fallen victim to severe damage or complete destruction (Appendix A).

The newsletter of the "Organization of American Historians" reported that the City of New Orleans had more than twenty historic districts, comprising over 33,000 historic structures. Preservationists now fear in light of such widespread damage bulldozing structures to the ground might become unavoidable (McPherson, 2005). When I contacted the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) as to the current status of Southern historic house museums, the response received was "...that at this time, Katrina museums are still in chaos with many not yet staffed."<sup>1</sup>

When museum professionals volunteered to aid in assessing the damage to building structures and collections, they were dismayed to discover that the magnitude of problems went well beyond the scope of salvage, restoration or conservation. Many of the houses were under the sole direction of dedicated volunteers. A great majority of these museums never had input from a museum professional to implement sound museum practices as to collection stewardship, inventories, documentation and policy and procedures. It would be impossible for anyone to know what was in some of the

---

<sup>1</sup> Davis, Terry ([www.aaslh.org](http://www.aaslh.org)). (2006, March 8). Status of damage to Southern historic houses. Response from Terry Davis, CFO and President of AASLH.

collections prior to Katrina and what was lost. In some cases, the condition of the objects before and after Katrina was not documented or known.

At the core of this thesis lies the question as to how the AAM Collections Planning Guide can serve historic house museums, with particular focus on the area of collection relevance, redundancy and stewardship. A Collections Planning Guide is not a panacea for all of the unique situations faced by historic house museums all over the country. However, it can be a guide and a supporting document when difficult museum collection decisions must be made while also bringing to light other issues relative to historic house museums.

## **Chapter 1**

### **A QUESTION OF NUMBERS**

In April 2002, a diverse group of 27 individuals, who had direct involvement in various areas of historic house museums assembled in Tarrytown, New York. Their meeting was held at Kykuit, the Rockefeller estate and house museum at the request of Terry Davis, Executive Director and CEO of the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) and James Vaughan, Vice-President of the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP). This three-day brainstorming gathering focused on the following issue:

In the increasing competition for visitors, members, and financial support, many, if not most, historic sites are struggling for survival, and the quality of preservation and maintenance of many such sites has declined precipitously. In addition, the quality and appeal of the historic house interpretation does not successfully compete with other contemporary sources of educational leisure time activities. Is it time for new models, new standards, or new approaches (George, 2002)?

The participants at the meeting agreed that historic house museums are sometimes redundant in both time period and architectural value. They also acknowledged that there are few examples of twentieth-century lifestyles. Historic interpretation is often questionable or not relevant to historic, current, or community issues. On a more positive note, all agreed that historic house museums are powerful assets that contribute to the stability, pride and sense of place for the community and allow visitors an opportunity to “step back in time.” They often offer visitors entrance to an atmosphere in which every object has its own significance. Visiting a historic house still ranks among the most popular leisure time activities (George, 2002).

The Tarrytown group agreed that, although popular with visitors, historic house museums all suffer from deferred maintenance, questionable preservation practices, low visitor attendance, and financial difficulties. One of the issues raised was that no one knew the exact number of historic house museums or sites there are currently across the country. Just how many historic house museums are there in America? In 1988, the National Trust for Historic Preservation commissioned an informal study and statistics were compiled from the data collected. There were at least five thousand historic property museums or one and a third for each county in the country. Of that number, 54 percent had an annual visitor count of less than five thousand. There was no paid full time staff at 65 percent and 80 percent had annual budgets of a maximum of \$50,000 (George, 2002). Working with such a small budget, even high priority budget items are difficult to finance. At best, such a meager budget will only allow for a band-aid approach to large budget items.

Once the group had identified the major obstacles faced by most historic house museums, it was time to make recommendations and offer suggestions and solutions. It was agreed that no one wanted to see these museums and collections abandoned by the founders or the museum community. The participants agreed that the museum organizations had to bear some responsibility for the problematic state of historic houses. Gerald George, a conference participant, noted that when the AAM crafted the industry standards, they used a “one size fits all” model.

In general, most museum professionals seek employment in well-established art museums for both the career opportunities available and the financial stability provided. The majority of historic house museums cannot offer prospective employees much in

advancement opportunities as compared to those available in art museums. This obviously puts historic house museums in a minority class, with less input into the activities of museum organizations, regardless of the fact that in number, historic house museums far exceed art and history museums countrywide.

The perception of having a minority voice in the professional museum community, coupled with a predominately volunteer staff, fostered the historic house museums to adopt an attitude of isolationism. As a result, historic house museum and historic societies adopted poor museum operation standards and procedures. Without an intellectual framework to guide the objectives of the museum and collection, there was no detailed goal for the present and the future collection. Working with both a lack of funds and knowledge of collection stewardship, some of these museums continued to add objects randomly in ways that had no relevance to the house, the present collection, or the future collection. The shift from a collection of museum-quality objects to old things found in the attic occurred easily and widely.

Historic house museums tend to take a passive approach to building a collection. This approach results in the acceptance of every item offered for donation to the museum. There is no thought given to collection relevancy, redundancy, or conservation. Larger institutions take a more pro-active approach to collection additions. If the object offered for donation does not meet the set criteria for the collection, these museums will turn down the donation, rather than accept an object unsuitable to the mission and collection of the museum and ability to preserve the object correctly.



## **Chapter 2**

### **HISTORIC PRESERVATION HISTORY**

The rationale for historic preservation is as multi-faceted as it is uncoordinated. In the United States, the historic preservation movement did not begin until the 1920s. Prior to that, Americans, including the colonists, had little interest in the preservation of the past. It was more important to showcase present achievements that symbolized the American progression towards an industrial economy from an agricultural setting. It was an accepted practice for profit-seeking entrepreneurs to construct new structures by demolishing the buildings of past generations. American culture was defined by the words, “progress takes precedence over preservation” (Wallace, 1996 p.180).

During the 1920s, prior to the Depression of 1929, the American economy appeared to be strong. A very wealthy, genteel segment of society evolved. This was the period symbolized by the construction of magnificent mansions and the acquisition of large collections of paintings and decorative art, a time of extravagance. Alarmed by the popular practice of demolishing existing structures to construct new buildings, wealthy members of society began to lobby for the preservation of existing structures. Their motivation did not stem from an interest in historic preservation. Their concern pertained to the symbolic preservation of the great wealth amassed by this select segment of the population. The great mansions and collections represented a particular lifestyle. Although their motives were not altruistic with regard to historic preservation, it was enough to influence public opinion.

It was not until the 1930s that the federal government, under the New Deal, took an active role in historic preservation. With the 1935 passage of The Historic Sites Act, the National Park Service, operating under the direction of the Department of the Interior, was mandated to acquire, preserve, and operate any privately owned historic property for preservation and educational purposes. It was the duty of the Park Service to have historians assess each historic house or site and determine its educational value to American history. Ironically, The Historic Sites Act could not stop the massive demolition undertaken by other directives of the New Deal that was charged with clearing slums and constructing roads (Wallace, 1996, p.184).

World War II and the shortage of manpower brought construction to a halt. However, the return of the troops in the late 1940s and early 1950s, resulted in a severe housing shortage. Both building construction and America's birth rate soared. The offspring of this generation are known as the "baby boomers." A new building concept was also born—inexpensive, identical tract houses, named to honor the man who originated the idea, Levittown. While this new style of construction was seen as the answer to affordable housing, the Levittown developments were not without controversy. By controlling the mortgages approved to black and minority applicants, Levittown was essentially developed for white owners. This was a period of renewed prosperity and new technology. The outcry for new, affordable construction put a hold on historic preservation. The pleas of historic preservationists were ignored and the impact on historic homes was devastating. The Historic American Building Survey statistics, released in 1966, revealed that in thirty years, one half of the twelve thousand properties recorded previously had been torn down (Wallace, 1996, p.186).

The trend toward new construction continued until the 1960s when a backlash movement began against urban renewal, high-rise buildings, and the destruction of the neighborhood concept. This movement caused recognition of the unrest in the country and a fear that any more destruction of America's past might result in a national identity crisis. In 1966, The Historic Preservation Act was passed. This Act restricted the demolition of an older structure to allow for new construction. As with many other movements, the pendulum now swung the other way and federal, state, and local governments began to preserve everything old, regardless of historic value or the purpose to which it would serve the citizenry. Buildings and houses designated as historic sites could not be demolished or remodeled in any way that was not in keeping with the original building design or floor plan.

All across the country, historic societies emerged with the intent purpose of preventing the destruction of old homes, factories, and schools. The resulting problem from all this collecting was historic house redundancy. Many of the houses mimicked each other in architectural style and historic significance. These institutions also represented only a very small segment of America's diverse population. While huge mansions of the wealthy were saved, homes of the poor, workers, minorities, and slaves were rarely, if ever, preserved.

The preservation movement lost its momentum during the lean years of the Reagan Administration. However, new life was breathed back into the preservation movement when some widely publicized lawsuits involving two well-known landmarks and a famous advocate for preservation caught the public's attention. The campaign to save Grand Central Station in New York City, spearheaded by Jacqueline Kennedy

Onassis, marked an enormous victory for historic preservation. When a famous New York City landmark church requested permission to construct a forty-seven foot commercial tower on some of its vacant, but historic land, the public outcry against this construction was enormous. Although the church argued that to deny this proposed construction was a violation of the First and Fifth Amendment rights, the Supreme Court refused to hear the church's appeal and the preservationists hailed another victory.

Once again strong and healthy, the preservation movement faced new challenges. There were questions raised about the significant number of historic houses and museums that were of similar types. While in agreement that each historic house preservation provides a valuable piece of the quilt of American history, the majority of the houses are often referred to as, "the homes of dead rich white guys," an observation that is not far from the truth. As neighborhood demographics changed, these homes began to disconnect from the local community. It is only within the last decade that both large and small historic house museums were encouraged to include some references in exhibits to the contributions and the role that the workers, the poor, the slaves, the Indians, and the immigrants had in American history (Moe, 2002).

By giving more accurate, relevant historical interpretations, many houses have been able to increase the number of visitors because both history and collection are more inclusive and relevant to a larger segment of the population. The public is more inclined to visit a historic house that gives a correct and comprehensive interpretation.

“Historic house museums cannot just relay to the visitor the life and experiences of the wealthy or famous owner. They must also give the visitor a complete knowledge of the sometimes complex or unpleasant truths in that history.

Historic house preservation has become an embarrassment of riches with no reliable statistics regarding numbers or historic value. (Donnelly, 2002).”

## **Chapter 3**

### **INDISCRIMINATE PRESERVATION**

#### **The Need for Preservation Criteria**

The impetus to preserve a particular house usually begins as a grassroots movement of community-minded citizens who are reluctant to lose a certain house that they believe gives their community or town a sense of time and place in history. Many historic societies are organized around the common theme of historical preservation. These institutions raise community awareness to their causes and work hard to secure the necessary funding to save its houses from demolition. Many of the organizers of the original preservation movement view the saving of the house as the attainment of the goal. Very few of those involved citizens realize that preservation is only the first of many steps to be taken.

The historic value the local community places on a property is not necessarily the same value that others outside of the local area will place on it. There is only value if there is a distinctive architectural element or a unique history to the house. Is the construction style of the building important to the time period? Is there a special historic story attached either to the house or its owners? What was the ultimate reason for the movement to save the house? These are some of the questions that should be answered before the organizing effort for preservation is put into motion. Should historic houses be thought of more as objects in a collection, much the same as paintings, sculpture, prints, and books are considered collection objects? Would there be a major impact on revenue and operations if historic houses were moved to a dedicated exhibit space in a locality so the houses were not scattered throughout various locations?

Once the property has been saved, difficult issues begin to surface. The historic society is now responsible for the upkeep of the house, the property, and stewardship of the collection of objects, if any, within the house. Raising funds for repairs, conservation studies, collection research and care, and other operational expenses are coupled with maintaining and attracting a sufficient number of volunteers dedicated to the house and the arduous work that must be done before opening to the public. This stage in the preservation is often overwhelming for a volunteer group, no matter how noble and well intentioned they are.

If you search any city or town guidebook for local tourist attractions, you find at least one, if not more, listings for historic houses. Not all historic houses have museums attached. Visitors are often surprised to find a historic structure with a placard in front giving a historical narrative of the house and its relevance to the area. However, the door is locked, no tour hours are listed, and no brochures are available to give more detailed information. Beyond the narrative marker, has visiting this historic site enriched or educated the visitor? Will this be a memorable event in the visitor's trip or will the visit be viewed as a stop made during a road trip? This description typifies a historic house preservation that was not well thought through. The house may be historically redundant of others in the area. It may not have a collection or the collection has no relevance to the house.

Some in the historic preservation community acknowledge this problem and have offered a solution—the controversial alternate use theory. The main idea of this theory is to retain the exterior of the historic house and use the interior space for more commercial endeavors, such as offices for small businesses and craft shops. Supporters of this theory

maintain it is the solution to two problems. It allows the house to be preserved and creates the availability of a unique setting for a commercial use.

A supporter of the adaptive or alternative use movement is noted architectural critic, Ada Louise Huxtable, "Preservation is the job of finding ways to keep those original buildings that provide the city's character and continuity and of incorporating them into its living mainstream—not placing them in 'sterile isolation' (New York Times, 1965)." This is not a new theory, but until recently the alternative use theory was rarely considered an option for historic houses. Today, it has gained momentum when a historical society realizes the extent of funding needed to restore and maintain a historic house museum and the shortage of available volunteers to do the actual work. When these volunteers are faced with a lack of funding and manpower to create a "step back in time" experience for potential visitors, they begin to consider other options to raise funds. One of the most popular alternative uses is to rent out all or a part of a historic property for private functions.

An example of the alternative use theory was adopted by an urban historic house museum that manages to offer visitors a museum-quality collection of furniture, clothing, and various decorative arts. In addition, a successful rental business supplements gate fees and other funding events. The trustees make the first floor of the house and the back garden available for rental. Purists in the preservation and museum community oppose this popular option as a source for additional funds, citing the potential for damage to both the house and the collection. In addition, questions are raised as to the accuracy of the historic interpretation and the integrity of the display collection. This is especially true with the landscape changes in the original herb and vegetable garden. To



accommodate the needs of renters and also to make the garden more attractive, original plants have been replaced with pathways, flowers, benches and fountains. The museum acknowledges the compromises required by this rental program, but it now employs a paid curator and museum educator. In spite of the deviation from the original design plan, this historic house museum has built a reputation of providing local schoolchildren with a superior historic educational program.

Another example of alternative use is a historic sandstone farmhouse with surrounding farmland and greenhouses. The trustees decided to convert the interior of the house into a consignment craft shop, a very successful venture. The historic society continues to operate the farm, without modern equipment and techniques. Substantial income is generated both from the rental of the house interior and the sale of produce and plants grown on the farmland. There are now enough funds to employ a full time caretaker to maintain and prevent damage or vandalism to the exterior structure of the house when it is closed. With no collection to exhibit and care for, this farmhouse has become a shopping destination rather than a source of local history.

The establishment of historic districts allows for entire neighborhoods to be designated as areas of historic homes and buildings. This occurred both in Savannah, Georgia and New Orleans, Louisiana. All houses in historic districts are registered on the historic trust registry but may continue to function as private residences. All structures in a historic district are protected from any inappropriate alteration by a restrictive covenant that requires approval from a historic committee before any changes are made to the property.

It was not until the 1930s that the federal government, under the New Deal, took an active role in historic preservation. With the 1935 passage of The Historic Sites Act, the National Park Service, operating under the direction of the Department of the Interior, was mandated to acquire, preserve, and operate any privately owned historic property for preservation and educational purposes. It was the duty of the Park Service to have historians assess each historic house or site and determine its educational value to American history. Ironically, The Historic Sites Act could not stop the massive demolition undertaken by other directives of the New Deal that was charged with clearing slums and constructing roads (Wallace, 1996, p.184).

World War II and the shortage of manpower brought construction to a halt. However, the return of the troops in the late 1940s and early 1950s, resulted in a severe housing shortage. Both building construction and America's birth rate soared. The offspring of this generation are known as the "baby boomers." A new building concept was also born—inexpensive, identical tract houses, named to honor the man who originated the idea, Levittown. While this new style of construction was seen as the answer to affordable housing, the Levittown developments were not without controversy. By controlling the mortgages approved to black and minority applicants, Levittown was essentially developed for white owners. This was a period of renewed prosperity and new technology. The outcry for new, affordable construction put a hold on historic preservation. The pleas of historic preservationists were ignored and the impact on historic homes was devastating. The Historic American Building Survey statistics, released in 1966, revealed that in thirty years, one half of the twelve thousand properties recorded previously had been torn down (Wallace, 1996, p.186).

The trend toward new construction continued until the 1960s when a backlash movement began against urban renewal, high-rise buildings, and the destruction of the neighborhood concept. This movement caused recognition of the unrest in the country and a fear that any more destruction of America's past might result in a national identity crisis. In 1966, The Historic Preservation Act was passed. This Act restricted the demolition of an older structure to allow for new construction. As with many other movements, the pendulum now swung the other way and federal, state, and local governments began to preserve everything old, regardless of historic value or the purpose to which it would serve the citizenry. Buildings and houses designated as historic sites could not be demolished or remodeled in any way that was not in keeping with the original building design or floor plan.

All across the country, historic societies emerged with the intent purpose of preventing the destruction of old homes, factories, and schools. The resulting problem from all this collecting was historic house redundancy. Many of the houses mimicked each other in architectural style and historic significance. These institutions also represented only a very small segment of America's diverse population. While huge mansions of the wealthy were saved, homes of the poor, workers, minorities, and slaves were rarely, if ever, preserved.

The preservation movement lost its momentum during the lean years of the Reagan Administration. However, new life was breathed back into the preservation movement when some widely publicized lawsuits involving two well-known landmarks and a famous advocate for preservation caught the public's attention. The campaign to save Grand Central Station in New York City, spearheaded by Jacqueline Kennedy

Onassis, marked an enormous victory for historic preservation. When a famous New York City landmark church requested permission to construct a forty-seven foot commercial tower on some of its vacant, but historic land, the public outcry against this construction was enormous. Although the church argued that to deny this proposed construction was a violation of the First and Fifth Amendment rights, the Supreme Court refused to hear the church's appeal and the preservationists hailed another victory.

Once again strong and healthy, the preservation movement faced new challenges. There were questions raised about the significant number of historic houses and museums that were of similar types. While in agreement that each historic house preservation provides a valuable piece of the quilt of American history, the majority of the houses are often referred to as, "the homes of dead rich white guys," an observation that is not far from the truth. As neighborhood demographics changed, these homes began to disconnect from the local community. It is only within the last decade that both large and small historic house museums were encouraged to include some references in exhibits to the contributions and the role that the workers, the poor, the slaves, the Indians, and the immigrants had in American history (Moe, 2002).

By giving more accurate, relevant historical interpretations, many houses have been able to increase the number of visitors because both history and collection are more inclusive and relevant to a larger segment of the population. The public is more inclined to visit a historic house that gives a correct and comprehensive interpretation.

## **Chapter 3**

### **INDISCRIMINATE PRESERVATION**

#### **The Need for Preservation Criteria**

The impetus to preserve a particular house usually begins as a grassroots movement of community-minded citizens who are reluctant to lose a certain house that they believe gives their community or town a sense of time and place in history. Many historic societies are organized around the common theme of historical preservation. These institutions raise community awareness to their causes and work hard to secure the necessary funding to save its houses from demolition. Many of the organizers of the original preservation movement view the saving of the house as the attainment of the goal. Very few of those involved citizens realize that preservation is only the first of many steps to be taken.

The historic value the local community places on a property is not necessarily the same value that others outside of the local area will place on it. There is only value if there is a distinctive architectural element or a unique history to the house. Is the construction style of the building important to the time period? Is there a special historic story attached either to the house or its owners? What was the ultimate reason for the movement to save the house? These are some of the questions that should be answered before the organizing effort for preservation is put into motion. Should historic houses be thought of more as objects in a collection, much the same as paintings, sculpture, prints, and books are considered collection objects? Would there be a major impact on revenue and operations if historic houses were moved to a dedicated exhibit space in a locality so the houses were not scattered throughout various locations?

Once the property has been saved, difficult issues begin to surface. The historic society is now responsible for the upkeep of the house, the property, and stewardship of the collection of objects, if any, within the house. Raising funds for repairs, conservation studies, collection research and care, and other operational expenses are coupled with maintaining and attracting a sufficient number of volunteers dedicated to the house and the arduous work that must be done before opening to the public. This stage in the preservation is often overwhelming for a volunteer group, no matter how noble and well intentioned they are.

If you search any city or town guidebook for local tourist attractions, you find at least one, if not more, listings for historic houses. Not all historic houses have museums attached. Visitors are often surprised to find a historic structure with a placard in front giving a historical narrative of the house and its relevance to the area. However, the door is locked, no tour hours are listed, and no brochures are available to give more detailed information. Beyond the narrative marker, has visiting this historic site enriched or educated the visitor? Will this be a memorable event in the visitor's trip or will the visit be viewed as a stop made during a road trip? This description typifies a historic house preservation that was not well thought through. The house may be historically redundant of others in the area. It may not have a collection or the collection has no relevance to the house.

Some in the historic preservation community acknowledge this problem and have offered a solution—the controversial alternate use theory. The main idea of this theory is to retain the exterior of the historic house and use the interior space for more commercial endeavors, such as offices for small businesses and craft shops. Supporters of this theory

maintain it is the solution to two problems. It allows the house to be preserved and creates the availability of a unique setting for a commercial use.

A supporter of the adaptive or alternative use movement is noted architectural critic, Ada Louise Huxtable, "Preservation is the job of finding ways to keep those original buildings that provide the city's character and continuity and of incorporating them into its living mainstream—not placing them in 'sterile isolation' (New York Times, 1965)." This is not a new theory, but until recently the alternative use theory was rarely considered an option for historic houses. Today, it has gained momentum when a historical society realizes the extent of funding needed to restore and maintain a historic house museum and the shortage of available volunteers to do the actual work. When these volunteers are faced with a lack of funding and manpower to create a "step back in time" experience for potential visitors, they begin to consider other options to raise funds. One of the most popular alternative uses is to rent out all or a part of a historic property for private functions.

An example of the alternative use theory was adopted by an urban historic house museum that manages to offer visitors a museum-quality collection of furniture, clothing, and various decorative arts. In addition, a successful rental business supplements gate fees and other funding events. The trustees make the first floor of the house and the back garden available for rental. Purists in the preservation and museum community oppose this popular option as a source for additional funds, citing the potential for damage to both the house and the collection. In addition, questions are raised as to the accuracy of the historic interpretation and the integrity of the display collection. This is especially true with the landscape changes in the original herb and vegetable garden. To

accommodate the needs of renters and also to make the garden more attractive, original plants have been replaced with pathways, flowers, benches and fountains. The museum acknowledges the compromises required by this rental program, but it now employs a paid curator and museum educator. In spite of the deviation from the original design plan, this historic house museum has built a reputation of providing local schoolchildren with a superior historic educational program.

Another example of alternative use is a historic sandstone farmhouse with surrounding farmland and greenhouses. The trustees decided to convert the interior of the house into a consignment craft shop, a very successful venture. The historic society continues to operate the farm, without modern equipment and techniques. Substantial income is generated both from the rental of the house interior and the sale of produce and plants grown on the farmland. There are now enough funds to employ a full time caretaker to maintain and prevent damage or vandalism to the exterior structure of the house when it is closed. With no collection to exhibit and care for, this farmhouse has become a shopping destination rather than a source of local history.

The establishment of historic districts allows for entire neighborhoods to be designated as areas of historic homes and buildings. This occurred both in Savannah, Georgia and New Orleans, Louisiana. All houses in historic districts are registered on the historic trust registry but may continue to function as private residences. All structures in a historic district are protected from any inappropriate alteration by a restrictive covenant that requires approval from a historic committee before any changes are made to the property.



The alternative use theory is a controversial answer to the problem created by indiscriminate historic preservation. It is imperative that a detailed analysis be made prior to historic house preservation addressing the probability of meeting all the expenses incurred for restoration, conservation and maintenance of the house and collection. In fairness to advocates of this theory, it is a viable solution for historic houses that lack sufficient staff or resources to maintain both the house and collection. In these cases, it is better to use the house for alternative purposes and thus preserve and protect the house from destruction.

## **Chapter 4**

### **THE ROLE OF MUSEUM ORGANIZATIONS**

The American Association of State and Local History (AASLH) was organized to offer a forum for continuing museum education on a more state and local regional scale and to lobby government agencies on behalf of the historical museum, regardless of size. In time, many other sub-groups were formed to serve a particular segment of museums. The Small Museum Association (SMA) focuses attention on the smaller museum and addresses the problems and obstacles they must overcome. In addition, both organizations offer member museums seminars, workshops, and books to inform and to educate members in current advances in museum education, museum operations, and collection care.

The missions of all museum organizations encourage members to strive for excellence in every area of museum administration and collection stewardship. The goal of museum excellence emphasized the necessity for written policy and procedures, improved collection conservation and care, and stressed the importance of the museum professional. No one questioned the validity of the stated goal and the need for standardization. However, this shift in focus created compliance pressure on the historic house community. Some of the standards were difficult to attain, if not impossible to implement in the setting of a historic house museum, especially those staffed by dedicated volunteers.

The pressure for written documentation caused frustration for many involved with historic house museums. The maintenance of formal standards and documentation processes faded as old habits and established practices prevailed. Some museums

attempted to comply with the guidelines for standardization. However, these guidelines did not address the limited financial and human resources available in small museums.

With the formation of the Small Museum Association (SMA), small museums secured a stronger presence in the larger museum organizations. The SMA encouraged its membership to attempt to maintain the highest standards achievable. The focus shifted away from trying to do the impossible and back to excelling with the possible, a more important and attainable goal. The new goal encouraged historic house museums to become a living community with creative planning to give the public an honest and accurate education of the collection and its historical significance.

To aid in the improvement of small museum operations, the SMA periodically schedules conferences, workshops and seminars to educate and address problems particular to the small museum. Since the majority of staff members are volunteers, attendance at these conferences and workshops can prove to be a costly personal expense. These expenses prohibit many members from attending these informative conferences. A possible solution is to make all presentation materials available, at a nominal fee, to all members unable to attend. This practice is done in many business organizations to make sure all new information is accessible to all members.

However, all is not bleak for the small museums and changes are in process. The American Association of Museums recognized that the standards and practices used in a large art or natural history museum are not easily transferable to smaller institutions and historic house museums. In July 2005, the AAM announced the formulation of a separate AAM Accreditation Program for use by museums in non-traditional settings. This new program supplements the original program that will still be used by large, conventional

museums. These new standards are customized and adapted for use by historic house museums and small museums. This is a second version of the original program, but it is not a watered-down, easier way to receive accreditation. There is an ongoing dialogue between the SMA and the AAM so that adjustments can be made, if needed, as a result of continuous feedback and communication from the membership. The release of these new accreditation standards has re-ignited the goal of achieving accreditation for small and historic house museums. In a letter sent to all SMA members in July 2005, Janice Klein, Chair, Small Museum Administrators Committee-AAM, announcing the new accreditation standards a CD was enclosed giving samples of various documents to use as guides. The letter acknowledged the many challenges small museums must overcome and difficulty in finding the time, money, or people to get the work done. The CD gave a choice of eight different types of small museums to facilitate viewing documents prepared by a similar museum. This will be an excellent resource for small museums and historic house museums to use to compare their standards and practices to the standards and practices of similar small museums and historic house museums.

## **Chapter 5**

### **GOVERNMENT FUNDING OR PRIVATE FUNDING**

Adequate funding is the major obstacle that historic house struggle with continuously. The historic house that marks the birthplace of a distinguished person in American history is acquired and maintained by the government. The houses and collections of very wealthy owners, such as the Fricks, the Rockefellers, and the DuPonts acquired through bequests with large endowments attached to provide funding for care of the mansions and the collections. However, the majority of historic houses acquired through the hard work and dedication of a local historic society. Most of the funding for maintenance and collection stewardship comes from door fees, donations, fundraising activities and private and public grants.

In the 1980s, there was a shortfall in funding for all historic house museums when the stock market crashed. The financial consequences were felt across the board, including those house museums with endowments attached. The funds acquired from financial investments decreased and budget adjustments had to be made. This situation will continue as long as interest rates remain low. The properties that receive revenue from a government agency or the return from invested endowments never experience the financial difficulties faced by historic house museums. Many of these small museums operate with yearly budgets of as little as \$50,000 and have dwindling visitor ship.

As financial support for the historic house diminishes, maintenance expenses escalate. The search begins for alternative fundraising and government grants. Grant writing is a complex process that, if not done correctly, will result in a denial. The lack

of adequate funding is perhaps the foremost problem facing historic house museums. With no available funds to hire professional museum staff, an all-volunteer group, no matter how dedicated, will have difficulty locating sources of income for building maintenance, collection care, education programs, and increasing visitor numbers. In real estate it is often said that the key words are location, location, location. In historic house museums the key words are funding, funding, funding.

Until the Reagan Administration, federal funding through both subsidies and grants for all cultural endeavors became the main source of funding for historic house museums. These funds were made available through the National Park Service. The focus of the new administration's policies was to dismantle the principals of the New Deal and the concept of the Great Society, holdovers from previous administrations. Included in this movement was the "sin" of historic preservation (Wallace, 1996, p.178).

The Reagan Administration's position on historic preservation was that it put a constraint on the free market. This position was based on the premise that the free, for-profit market was restricted from the re-development of land for new ventures. Prohibiting the demolishing of historic buildings was a detriment to the country's growth and economy. Preservation funds were severely cut. Preservationists and historians called this administration directive, "historicide" citing the passage of the Historic Preservation Act in 1966 that was crafted to make saving our past an important priority on all state and local agendas.

In November 1984, the Treasury Department, acting on a directive from President Reagan, called for a total recall of all tax incentives for historic rehabilitation

(Wallace, 1996, p.207). Eventually both historic house museums and historic preservationists realized that total dependence on government funding for historic house museums preservation movements was like being on a roller coaster and recognized how the allocation of funds could be easily manipulated by the constituents of elected politicians and the health of the nation's economy. The logical question to ask is was the government justified in withholding grants from historic house museums? Why should the government spend taxpayer money on so many small museums that lacked an institutional identity, a cohesive collection, adequate conservation, and poor operating practices?

When it comes to government economics, two words come to mind—red tape. This is clearly illustrated in a recent article in the online magazine of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The article was about the Senate appropriations committee approving a \$106 million hurricane relief bill that includes \$80 million for historic homeowners in Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana. Richard Moe, president of the National Trust, was quoted as saying that these funds represent the targeted relief that is so desperately needed to save the region's unique heritage (Foster, 2006). Although the bill was approved on April 4<sup>th</sup>, it will not be voted on by the Senate until the end of the month. One must wonder how much more damage will be done to these already devastated houses until the government red tape reaches its end and the money is released.

Unless a way is found to stabilize the incomes of many historic houses, they will soon be lost forever. A few historic societies have begun to explore affiliations with other historic house museums and are organizing cooperatives to share common expenses

to maintain the upkeep of these houses. Other more radical ideas, such as the controversial alternative use theory that was previously discussed, are being seriously considered. It still remains to be seen if organization, standardization, affiliation, and cooperation will prove to yield enough resources to support all these properties. Without more creative thinking and active community involvement, this may not be enough.

The historic house museums cannot remain static, locked in discussion of their plight, if they want to do more than just survive. With so many venues for entertainment available, historic house museums must first take an internal look to see what changes may be needed within the organization. They must carefully scrutinize the present methods used to attract new supporters and assemble statistics to show how well they are retaining present supporters. The profile of today's museum visitor has changed, historic house museums need to identify the changes in the profiles and then examine the quality and content of the programs presented by the museum to see that they are meeting the needs and expectations of the visitor. This analysis will pinpoint what changes should be made to the internal organization. It will reveal the relevance of public programs to the current demographics and lifestyles of visitors. Fundraising activities should be adjusted to the wants of the community so that they will attract an enthusiastic group. It is time to look beyond the government for funding.

Creative thinking should be encouraged as a way to increase revenue. The alliance of the Trust for Historic Preservation and Home and Garden Television is a new and exciting venue bringing public attention to historic houses and their museums. This is a positive step to encourage museums to aspire to attract visitors from beyond the local community. To accomplish this goal however, the museum must be willing to do its part



and make sure that the collection exhibits are attractive and informative, the collection contents are accurate, and the story told has educational. Of course, this alliance with Home and Garden Television has its downside. Will the historic house museum give up its identity as a cultural venue and become a commercial attraction? Who will have control of the house and the management of its collection—the sponsors or the museum? These are important issues to be considered. However, since this collaboration is still new, only time will tell what the outcome will be when culture and entertainment become allies.

## **Chapter 6**

### **THE COLLECTION PLANNING GUIDE**

In November 2002, the AAM organized the National Collections Planning Colloquium in collaboration with the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History. For two days, the group consisting of 80 museum professionals representing 36 institutions and 11 facilitators discussed collection issues. This meeting resulted in the publication of the AAM Guide to Collections Planning. This book contains a series of essays written by the participants covering a variety of collection questions and possible solutions. The main idea focused on in this book is what question an institution should ask when discussing its collection. A Collections Planning Guide asks the question, "What should be in the collection?" not "does it fit within the collection (Gardner, 2002)?" Museums need an intelligent plan as new material is acquired and responsibility for its care is assumed.

The Collection Plan is a living document that will allow for periodic review and adaptation to changes and needs in the future. Its crafting should be an on-going process. Before beginning to compose a planning guide, one must have an understanding of what is meant by the term intellectual framework. The purpose of intellectual framework is to explain the theory and to frame the intent of the collection. Intellectual framework gives control of the collection to the museum and protects it from being subjected to the whims of board members, curators, volunteers, or paid staff members. There is a tendency in historic house museums to build "a" collection, instead of building "the" collection. This is a simplified example of the theory of passive and active collecting. A well-written

Collections Planning Guide can answer many of the questions that arise when accepting or declining an object for the collection.

The mission statement of the museum should not be confused with a Collections Planning Guide. It is important to understand the difference between the two documents. The mission statement defines the existence and purpose of the museum and how the collection will be used to support this purpose. It is the first written document of any museum and is written so as to be broad in scope. The Collection Planning Guide supports the relationship of the collection to the mission statement and outlines what the present collection is, what the collection should be, and what the goals for the future collection will be.

The planning guide has a direct relationship to other documents that are not always found in historic houses such as, the financial plan, collections care plan, storage plan and code of ethics. The planning guide benefits not only the museum collection but also brings attention to the absence of any other documents that are pertinent to museum operations. A well-written planning guide provides enough information and guidance regarding the collection contents to allow anyone connected with the direct operation of a historic house museum to make an intelligent, informed decision as to the appropriateness of an object currently in the collection or being considered for addition to the collection.

The presence of a planning guide gives guidelines, especially useful for small museums and historic houses, to avoid collecting objects that cannot be properly taken care of. Those are objects for which there may be no available funds to preserve, restore, conserve, or store. They will not add value to the experience or education of the visitor.

However, the planning guide does not restrict obtaining objects that may have no relevance to the particular collection exhibited at the historic house. But the object may have great historic value. These objects can be obtained as a means to generate additional funds to be used to acquire new objects relevant to the present collection through the sale of the other object.

The use of a Collections Planning Guide in the setting of the historic house museum may be just the tip of the iceberg. It, more often than not, exposes other problem areas of museum operations that need further documentation or issues that have never been addressed before. A Collections Planning Guide should be written for every museum or historic house that holds a collection whether large or small. It does not have to be elaborately crafted document with numerous pages. One of the seminars given at the AASLH 2005 Annual Conference was entitled, "*Saying No: Effective Collections Policies.*" The main theme of the seminar was that your ability to control eager potential donors is only as good as your policies (Patrick, 2006). The handout given with the seminar is in a simple outline form that will lend itself to the historic house museum community (Appendix B).

## **Chapter 7**

### **ADVANTAGES OF COLLECTIONS PLANNING**

How does a Collections Planning Guide have any impact on the problematic historic house museum beyond the addition of one more document for someone to write? In order to answer this question, it is advantageous to understand how ownership of historic house museums is usually arranged. The majority of historic houses are bought with combined funds from both state and local governments and the individuals who eventually form the historic society or friends group. Since the bulk of the money comes from government sources, the state usually retains title to the house and land. This is also true when a historic house is obtained by bequest to a state or locality.

The historic society assumes responsibility for the contents within the house. This creates a dual ownership arrangement with each party sharing responsibility for the care of a designated part of the historic house museum. This ownership arrangement can be a blessing or a burden for those involved. The following saga of a historic house with this dual ownership will further explain the difficulties that may arise.

This particular house was located in a suburban area. It had a long historic story pre-dating the Revolutionary War. When the last of the owners passed away, the property including the house, its outbuildings and contents were willed to the state in which the property was located. Because of the rich history associated with this house, the community rallied together and a dedicated citizenry formed a historic society to oversee this preservation gem.

It took the state approximately two years to officially take title to the house and pass the full control and responsibility for the contents of the house to the historic society.

However, during the time that elapsed before the state had officially taken title, the house and its contents were damaged through neglect and vandalism. Without any security fencing to protect the premises, it became a target for trespassers and for theft. People entered the house at will and began to remove furniture and other items in the house. In addition, the roof was in need of repair and the water that leaked into the house caused further damage to both the interior of the house and its contents.

Finally after two years, the state officially took title to the property. The state surrounded the property with security fencing and made minimal repairs to the roof and house. The historic society took ownership of the collection that was now minimally protected from further damage.

With this accomplished, the historic society began to assess the contents of the house. There was no prior inventory of the contents of the house. The society was unable to document object were missing from the house collection. Many articles of clothing and other textiles were water damaged from the holes in the roof. A plea was put out to the local community for any information regarding the return of any of the house contents. Some people responded and slowly objects were returned to the historic house. However, it was well known in the community that the dining room table occupied a space in the home of a local citizen. The historic society made attempts to retrieve the table, even offering to buy it back. At present, the dining table is finally being returned to the house, through the good will of the surviving family members of the woman who originally took it from the house.

As the years passed, the state began to take more interest in the restoration of the house and allocated funds to make repairs and build a visitor's center with office space.

The historic society had items spanning two centuries and used a furnishing plan to display this eclectic collection. However, a complete inventory was never done and documents supporting the historic society's ownership of certain collection objects are not evident, as was the situation with the dining room table. Other documents are not recorded or filed and just stored in boxes. Some research was done and based on the information gathered; a historic interpretation was prepared for the house and collection. However, there are still interesting architectural features on the exterior of the house that when visitors ask questions of the guides about these features, the questions go unanswered because no research has been done.

Today, the state maintains the house but it is difficult to install any air-conditioning and ventilating system in the house without compromising the architectural design or the interior of the house. A proper storage area is not on site and many textile items, including hats, dresses, men's suits, and quilts, are stored in an area in the attic of the visitor center where temperature and humidity cannot be controlled. These poor storage conditions are causing further deterioration of the textiles that are also exposed to small animals that enter through open windows. Poor storage ability also prohibits this museum from entering into any collection loan arrangements with other museums because there is no guarantee that can be given regarding proper storage and care while loan objects are in their possession. Although this historic house museum is able to employ a curator for the collection, the remainder of the collection management staff is composed of volunteers who must first be trained in the proper handling of objects in a museum collection.

The Collections Planning Guide is comparable to a useful business tool known as the SWOT Analysis. The initials represent the following: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. This is an analysis frequently done in the business community by start-up businesses or those contemplating expansion. If written carefully and used properly, a Collections Planning Guide can do a similar analysis for the historic house museum collection without too much customization.

To do this analysis correctly, all the objects in the collection must be examined and inventoried. Those objects that are in accord with the mission statement are the strengths of the collection. Objects that do not fit the mission statement should be put aside for further evaluation. Those objects that have seriously deteriorated or damaged and those objects whose value is questionable are the weaknesses of the collection. Objects that are in good condition and have important historic value but do not fit the mission statement are considered the collection opportunities. These are the objects that the museum may consider selling to, trading with, or bartering with other museums in order to obtain an object of equal historic value and condition that is more aligned with its mission statement. The final category identifies your competition or threats. In regard to the collection, the threats are the objects that financially or logistically cannot realistically be cared for properly or stored by the museum without causing deterioration and a loss of value. This category can also identify competitors, such as other similar historic house museums in the immediate area that are competing for the same market share.

An object, classified in the weakness or threat category, requires a serious look at the cost versus value equation. The museum needs to evaluate whether the value to the



museum by keeping this object in the collection outweighs the cost of the additional expenses incurred to maintain and exhibit the object in the best possible environment. If the museum has the funding to provide all the needed requirements for storage and care and the object is within the guidelines of the mission statement, then the object should be kept with provisions made for any environmental costs.

A Collections Planning Guide provides the museum staff an opportunity to assess each of the objects found in the collection by answering these simple questions:

1. Does the object fall within the perimeters of the mission statement?
2. What is the condition of the object and is its historic value known?
3. Can the museum care for this object properly without damaging it?
4. Is there documentation regarding title or ownership history available?
5. Does the museum have sufficient, safe storage for this object?
6. Should this object be kept for sale so it will be possible to acquire a more suitable object to complete a gap in the current collection, or bring value to the goals for our future collection?
7. Will it be possible to identify an unknown object and document its purpose?  
If this is not possible, what procedures are in place for these situations?
8. Is there redundancy in the number of a particular object?
9. Is the object of exhibit quality or can it be useful for use in school programs?
10. Are there enough objects in the collection to produce thematic exhibits?

In the process of sorting the collection objects, there will be a natural progression to compile a finding aid, inventory the collection objects, complete condition reports, accession the objects, and, if possible, photograph them. If necessary, objects can be

deaccessioned providing there is a written procedure for the process. If the object has not been officially accepted by the museum, it can be returned to the donor. Just the act of physically handling and examining objects can give one a sense of pride in having guardianship of these treasured heirlooms that are a representation of a time past. This may be all the impetus needed to encourage learning and practicing good collection stewardship.

Because of the deep involvement of the local community in the actual preservation of the historic house and collection, their zeal and pride in their achievement can often lead to a perception of ownership. It is this perception that has the most influence on collection contents. Difficult decisions must sometimes be made regarding objects that have a local significance but not necessarily significance to the collection. In these instances it is sometimes best to take the path of least resistance rather than to jeopardize the collection's future. A well-written, detailed Collection Planning document is a useful tool to guide all museum staff in matters of accepting or rejecting the offers of donated objects to the museum.

Activities in historic preservation and museums have shifted from the efforts of a diligent group of ladies dedicated to preservation of a historic site, to educated museum professionals who can be found in various positions in all types of museums. For small, community-based museums and historic societies, it is still difficult to acknowledge the organization and professionalism of the museum community. The time has come to begin to incorporate business theories into planning, to be aware and make use of new operating practices and technology, to develop a clinical eye toward collection contents, to improve the use of financial resources, day-to-day operations, and decision making.

## Chapter 8

### EXTERNAL INFLUENCES CAUSE EDUCATION CHANGES

How many times have you made a return visit to a historic house museum that offers guided tours given by volunteer guides (docents) and been told two different versions of the same story? As distant as the connection may seem, this very common situation would be improved with the use of a Collections Planning Guide.

*Although this scenario can happen in any museum, it is an especially common occurrence in historic house museum tours. The reason why it is possible for visitors to hear different versions of historic house story and collection information is rooted in the issues of attachment, education and the accuracy of the historic interpretation of the collection available. Once again, a Collections Planning Guide can offer some consistency to this most important aspect of a museum—visitor education.*

To better understand this connection, it is necessary to step back and review the practices and perceptions of historic house museum tours. With a limited operating budget, it is an impossibility to hire a museum educational specialist to prepare and oversee the educational programming that every museum assumes the responsibility of providing to its visitors. *Some small museums may be able to engage the services of a museum educator on a consultant basis. The usual path taken by historic societies is to have the historic research and information needed for the storyline provided the town historian and the local librarian, both working on a volunteer basis.*

Many of the tour guides, who give the tours, are the same dedicated individuals who were members of the original group of preservationists. *Their passion and attachment for all things pertaining to the historic house is both a blessing and an*

obstacle. This passion and the enchantment of sharing the experience of entering into the past is very much in evidence in their dedication and enthusiastic attitude about all aspects of the house tour and museum collection. However, this very same passion, coupled with a strong attachment for all things connected to the house, often changes the attitude of the guide once strangers must be allowed to enter into “their home.” During the tour, the tour guide adopts a rather territorial attitude. The guide’s focus shifts from offering visitors an exciting, informational tour, to making sure that the house is protected from these intruders, who walk on the floors, attempt to lean into rooms and are often chastised for touching objects. Other volunteer guides believe that their volunteer status is accompanied by the freedom to add original embellishments to both the history of the house and the significance of the collection. It is not difficult to understand how visiting tourists and the general public equate “velvet ropes across room doorways” and “elderly women in tennis shoes” symbolic of historic house museum tours.

Some museums offer guides extensive and ongoing training as to the information they will give to the visitors. Unfortunately, most historic house museums do not have the resources to offer tour guides comprehensive education programs. Any facility working with a volunteer group must prioritize tasks to maximize the return from the available volunteer hours while still being considerate of both the time constraints and physical limitations of the volunteers. All non-profit organizations recognize the contributions made by volunteers and the important role volunteers have in non-profit organizations.

When working with an all-volunteer staff, it is important to recognize the invisible line that differentiates the paid staff from the volunteers. This line separates the organizational need to have tasks performed properly in a timely fashion and the volunteers need to be appreciated and in some situations to be placated when imposing restrictions or demands on their time. The interaction with volunteers requires skillful communication on a much more emotional level than a more business-like level that would be the norm with paid staff.

Does collection planning offer any discernible value to volunteer and visitor education? Once the collection has been tailored to the historic house museum's mission and timeline, it is much easier to create educational forums for guides about a smaller collection and to present them with material that gives detailed information in an organized chronology. The availability of printed, scripted material they can refer to, will allow each guide to bring their own unique delivery style to the tour narrative. However, this simple methodology will act as a control to curb the tendency of giving different, embellished versions of the story of the same house and museum. Even minimal education will result in guides being well informed and eliminate the embarrassment to both the guide and the museum by the inability of the guide to accurately answer questions asked by the tour participants.

The active use of a Collections Planning Guide will make the collection more cohesive and perhaps smaller in the number of objects. When the individuals charged with deciding what the future direction taken by the historic house museum believe that a Collections Planning Guide benefits only the collection, they have only seen the obvious and not the potential contributions of the planning guide. If a planning guide is seen as a

negative force because the end product is a smaller collection then the impact that the planning guide can make on all of the other functions and activities of a museum will not be recognized. A planning guide should be viewed as a positive force as it will provide guides with more information about collection objects and improve their ability to answer questions accurately without the need to fabricate answers.

Guides, whether paid or volunteer, should be encouraged to view the historic house museum as a producer of quality education and information that is provided to the end user, the visitor. Organization, written documentation, a clearly defined direction for a representative collection, in-house education, and placing more emphasis on the importance of visitor education and satisfaction can result in a buy-in by all museum staff to this new concept of viewing the museum as the seller and the visitor as the buyer.

Much of this new thinking is the result of changing demographics and expectations of the historic house museum visitor. An article in, *Museum News*<sup>2</sup>, discusses the lifestyles and cultural changes that have resulted in a different profile of the current museum visitor. The study factored in the effects of the automobile age, the women's movement, the influx of women in the work force, the baby boom generation, the adoption of the quality versus quantity family time theory, and a new generation of Highly educated parents with children born in a fast-paced, technology-based environment. The new museum visitor wants the visit to be a fun, learning experience that can incorporate "family bonding" time with intellectual and personal enlightenment (Chung & May, 2005).

---

<sup>2</sup> Chung, J. & May, T. (2005, Nov/Dec). X-tended family: attracting the post-boomer audience. *Museum News*, 54.

According to a survey taken in 1996 by Travel Industry Associates of America, trips to visit historic destinations were planned by 45 % of the adults surveyed. This meant that historic destination visits ranked fourth in interest. The first three in popularity were visits to particular cities, relatives, or water destinations. When surveying families, historic visits ranked second in popularity with the first destination being ocean beaches. Of the 40% of families making plans for historic site visits, the common reasons for selecting this choice were lower costs, increases in family travel that included educational experiences along with leisure activities (Sanchis, 1996).

A new trend has also been observed among the aging baby boom generation when making choices about which leisure activities to participate in. It is reported that they are less likely to choose to pursue rigorous activities and prefer traveling to and visiting historic destinations (AARP, 2006).

With all these changes in visitor choices and expectations, visiting a historic house museum is still a very popular leisure activity. However, the historic house museum must make sure that it identifies these new visitor expectations and takes steps to provide an accurate historical story. It is time for these museums to define their collections so they are accurate and the interpretation told is correct. Generating income from gate fees is an important source of funding to house museums and without change; they risk losing their share of this market. A Collections Planning Guide requires more work than money, but it produces many surprise rewards.

No museum is immune to collection errors. There are slight errors found even in the most prestigious of historic house museums—Winterthur. Henry Francis DuPont wanted his mansion's rooms to be representative of America during the period of 1640

and 1860. It is only recently that guides will call visitor attention to some of the errors in the collections displayed. These errors are referred to as “misconceptions” and include objects such as cut flowers in punch bowls (popular in the 1920s), the use of conversational grouping of furniture (introduced in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century) and the abundance of Oriental rugs and crystal chandeliers.

In the example of Winterthur’s collection misconceptions, museum officials, Dwight P. Lanmon and Brock Jobe, decided to allow the guides to acknowledge some, but not all, of the errors to visitors. The decision was made to leave the collections as DuPont had arranged them, because “this was one man’s ideas of history (Reif, 1996).”<sup>3</sup> The main objective of a Collections Planning Guide is to avoid exhibit errors that cause visitors to question the accuracy of the information received and damage the reputation of the historic society.

With the identification of the new museum visitor, historic house museums should look to improving any education programs that they offer. There are many different avenues to take to provide interesting, innovative programs that can be customized to meet the expectations of a larger segment of the population. Historic house museums should expand educational programming beyond the yearly school class trip, the bread and butter group of visitors. By offering a variety of more intellectual programs and lectures during evening hours it is possible to reach out to the 25 to 40 age range or the over 65 group. As quoted in *Museum News*, Rick Beard, executive director of the Atlanta

---

<sup>3</sup> Reif, R., (April 25, 1999). Art/Architecture: Correcting the Errors of a Benefactor’s Ways. *The New York Times* (online). <http://travel2.nytimes.com/mem/travel/articles/printpage.html> (August 10, 2004)



Historical Society, said, "The perception remains that history is dull and boring, at least as it is portrayed in history museums (Rees, 1998)."<sup>4</sup>

This observation should be heard as a wake-up call for all historic house museums to recognize the need and the importance of creating educational programs that offer more than the recitation of facts. Historic house museums may represent a time past, but they must become forward thinking and keep in step with the changing world. In May 1997, the Association for Living History, Farm and Agricultural Museums (ALHFAM) conducted a panel session to discuss the education variables that influence the history story (Boardman, 1997). The trend to historic visitations was especially popular in the 1970s with the celebration of the Bicentennial. The education buzzwords at that time were "hands on" and "interactive."

Again, historic house museums gained no financial benefit from this trend because of the difficulty of adapting historic structures to modern technological requirements needed for interactive exhibitions and computerized dioramas, without disturbing the integrity of the house structure. At this time, the majority of house museums did not have adequate research and accurate information about the collections to engage in any hands-on programs. Electronic gadgetry cannot replace accurate information and a clear understanding of the exhibit collection that allows for human interaction.

The influx of amusement park-like historic reproductions in the 1990s brought a new education buzzword, "edutainment." This added the requirement of fun to education programs. Although some historic sites embraced this concept and do well with it, others

---

<sup>4</sup> Rees, J., (December 4-5, 1998). Forever the Same, Forever Changing: The Dilemma Facing Historic Houses. American House Museums An Athenaeum of Philadelphia Symposium. <http://www.philathenaeum.org/hmuseum/rees.html> (March 21, 2006).

fail miserably and the whole concept of edutainment is in question by historians and educators as to its validity as a tool that belongs in a historic education program.

Although historic house museum collections are often lacking cohesiveness, direction, research and care, the historic house museum retains a certain position of authenticity by not succumbing to these modern trends even if they had the ability and resources to do so. The purity of the history told by a historic house and its museum cannot be tarnished, only improved upon. However, its purpose for preservation and the education the house and collection can offer visitors must remain true and meaningful and never allowed to become a caricature.

## **Chapter 9**

### **DIFFICULT COLLECTION DECISIONS—ACCEPT OR REJECT**

It is important for a historic house museum or any museum to have the ability to change exhibit displays. If the exhibit remains static, there will be few returning visitors. Very few museums have all of the collection on exhibit at one time. This brings up the issues of conservation, storage and the decisions made regarding accepting or declining objects offered for donation to a collection.

The resources to store an object and the actual ability of the historic house museum to provide an environment that will conserve collection objects, not displayed in the current exhibit, is a situation that requires making difficult decisions. These conservation decisions are universal to all museums, large or small. However, the conservation standards used in art museums cannot be applied to historic house museums. Conservation is the responsibility of all collectors and owners, regardless of available financial resources. Different conservation methods must be used in a historic house setting as collections are exposed to many damaging elements that cannot be controlled such as, cold air rushing in through an open door or light streaming in through a window. It is not a scientific principle that forms the basis for conservation. Issues of conservation and storage are based on the concept of “do no harm” (Bachmann, pg.1-2).

As has already been discussed, historic societies indulge in passive collection believing that the more we have, the more we have to exhibit. However, in every museum there will be objects accepted into collection that have political overtones connected to them. The reason some objects must be accepted has more to do with the importance of the donor or benefactor, not the collection value of the object. It is a usual

practice in museums to readily accept these objects, as other benefits will outweigh the object's worth.

With all of this random accumulating of objects, it does not take long before the collection's value to the historic house is in question, and it outgrows the available storage in the historic house. It is not the purpose of a Collection Planning Guide to keep the size of the collection within the dimensions of available storage and exhibit space. It is, however, the document that defines the collection contents, relevance and future aims. This may result in a thinning out of a collection, but it does not eliminate the issues of conservation and storage.

The two factors that cause the most damage to museum objects are humans and environment. To conserve museum objects properly, there must be adequate control over light exposure, temperature, humidity, and handling, as any one of these elements can cause serious damage. The ideal solution for a historic house museum is to build a separate storage area where the environment can be regulated with the installation of temperature, humidity and ventilation systems and staff access to the storage area limited. This is more of a dream than reality for facilities with small budgets. However, a lack of funds cannot be the excuse used for failure to provide proper conservation and storage of any object a museum has assumed ownership of.

The inability to conserve an object is a very valid reason, no matter how difficult, to turn down an offer of any object that the historic society has no provision to store or exhibit properly. It is also an acceptable practice to sell an object that cannot be stored properly. Selling collection objects comes with the proviso that funds generated from the sale must be used for collection purposes only. As long as the environment historic

house museums prefer to operate in remains autonomous and isolated, there is little opportunity to combine storage resources with any other nearby historic house. This makes collection conservation and storage still a major, unsolved problem in small budget museums.

Once the Collections Planning Guide is put into use in a museum, it is important for the contents of the guide to be known and understood by every person involved with the historic house. This may require writing two versions of the same plan, one, a more detailed version and the other, a simplified version. The planning guide gives the museum staff a procedure to follow with clear directive to facilitate the need to decline a donation without offending the donor. The decision making process is easier for the staff, if they are all familiar with the direction that the collection will take in the future. The plan identifies the collection objects as a cohesive entity with purpose and meaning and prevents the collection from resembling the unconnected collection of stuff found in grandma's attic. It is far more desirable to have a smaller exhibit of organized and cared for objects that tell a specific story, then to have a large chaotic collection of objects that have no story to tell.

Sometimes, it is the name of the museum that dictates the contents of a collection. For example, if the museum's name is specific to being a museum of candy products, the presence of an exhibit of cookie tins that were part of the original collection will confuse and mislead the visitor. Although this museum will have adequate storage, in time the space occupied by the cookie tins could be put to better use storing candy items.

Houses are not the only buildings preserved by historic societies. Many times a factory, church, or school is the preserved for historic value. This is the case with an old

schoolhouse saved from demolition by concerned citizens for use as a museum. A careful inspection of the contents of the collection revealed an eclectic combination of desks, chalkboard and writing tablets, in addition to medical instruments, paintings, and decorative arts more suitable to a house than a school, and articles of clothing from various time periods. Most of these objects have questionable relevance to a schoolhouse story. Most of the collection is stored in the unheated attic of the building, not inventoried, researched, not yet discovered, as they are hidden in the eaves of the attic and covered with dust. There was only one dedicated volunteer to sort through this conglomeration of objects. The volunteer was clearly overwhelmed by the magnitude of this task.

In an article, B.Appelbaum<sup>5</sup> writes about the conflicting interests and complex issues that arise in exhibiting and storing historic house collections. When collection objects are presented in an exhibit setting, the objective is to exhibit them as they would have been used and that requires the objects be cleaned up just enough to make the objects look as when they were made. As a whole, historic house collections are exposed to more hazards exhibited in settings that provide little physical protection.

An object in a historic house collection receives all of its meaning from the person who owned, sat in it, or wore it. Very little value or information may be known about the maker of the object. In an art museum, a higher value is placed on the creator of the object than its owner (Appelbaum, 1994).

---

<sup>5</sup> Appelbaum, B., "1994: Criteria for Treatment of Collections Housed in Historic Structures." JAIC ONLINE/Journal of the American Institute for Conservation 33 (2) Article 9 185-191. <http://aic.stanford.edu/jaia/articles/jaic33-02-009.html>. Accessed March 29, 2006.

**Chapter 10**  
**COLLECTIONS PLANNING GUIDE**  
**OR**  
**HISTORIC FURNISHING PLAN**

Research for this thesis included a review of literature and Internet contact using a dedicated museum list serve. Many of the museum professionals, who responded to my inquiry about the use of a Collections Planning Guide, were directly involved with the operation of historic house museums. From the responses received, many indicated the use of a Historic Furnishing Plan as the guide for the material context used for interpretation and collection content. Is a Collections Planning Guide interchangeable with the Historic Furnishing Plan? To find the answer to this question, it is essential to compare both of these plans as to function and composition to gain a better understanding of the similarities and the differences, if any, of these two documents.

A Historic Furnishing Plan is much like a blueprint for the furnishings and collection objects that will be used to furnish historic house museum rooms. The main purpose of a Furnishing Plan is to integrate the furnishings and decorative arts objects to the Interpretative Plan for the historic house. It details what furniture is placed in each room and establishes the historic connection between collection and story. The Furnishing Plan and the Interpretative Plan are dependent on each other. This is not a necessity for a Collections Planning Guide.

A Collections Planning Guide requires more detailed research into locating documentation to support ownership of collection objects. It is centered in the appropriateness of the collection, not in how the collection will be exhibited in the house.

As discussed in previous chapters, the purpose of a Collections Planning Guide is to set the scope of the collection, identify gaps in the collection, any redundancy of objects, relevance to historic story, and set future goals for collecting purposes.

The Interpretative Plan and the Historic Home Furnishing Plan should be composed after the collection objects have been evaluated and organized. All three of these plans require research. However, the research done is different for each plan. The Furnishing plan outlining how the house will appear when furnished, requires research into photographs, written material that might make reference to furniture placement, wall decorations, and other material objects to aid in visualization of the story represented.

The Furnishing Plan is important to all historic house museums, large or small. In small museums, it is usually only done once. In rare instances if new objects are acquired, new history revealed, or the house is severely damaged, as was the case with the houses in the South, there may be a need for a new Furnishing Plan. When historic house museums undertake to furnish a house with period rooms, it is not uncommon for the curator to identify what items are missing from the room. However, along with the description of the item is a notation as to whether an original object is needed or if a reproduction will be satisfactory.

Historic house museums are classified in three different categories. The first category is documentary and display objects that are directly traceable to the house or representative of objects commonly used in the same time frame. This is the most common category. The second category is representative and is interpreted with a particular focus on lifestyles or historic periods. The third category is known as aesthetic



style and emphasizes the art and beauty of the period with less emphasis on the historic content.<sup>6</sup>

Although it may be possible for historic house museums to use only a Historic House Furnishing Plan to maintain a general idea of the scope, size and condition of the collection, this is not the main function of this plan. The purpose of the Furnishing Plan is to dictate how the collection will be exhibited, how objects will be placed, and maintain the connection between the house, the collection and the historic story through the creation of real lifestyle settings. The purpose of the Collections Planning Guide is to research the collection as to its authenticity, value, contents and future.

---

<sup>6</sup> Brooks, Bradley C., (2002). The Historic House Furnishings Plan: Process and Product. Interpreting Historic House Museums. California: AltaMira Press. 127-132

## **Chapter 11**

### **LOOKING FORWARD**

As we enter the 21<sup>st</sup> Century it is important for the historic house museum and preservationists to take a broader view as to the future. There are many difficulties that are faced by these museums that will always define them—smallness, lack of funding and staff, poor collection stewardship and status-quo operating techniques. An aging and dwindling source of volunteers, is finally forcing these museums to give up their preference for independent operation and isolationism and finally band together.

Collaboration is a tool that can benefit these struggling symbols of our cultural heritage before they fade from our landscape forever. The first collaboration should be formed with colleges and universities to extend internship opportunities to interested students. All small museums and historic house museums have much to offer to college students and much to gain from them. Often the students are searching for an opportunity to use newly learned skills, gain credit for a course requirement, or expand their knowledge base with real-life experience. Historic house museum collaboration with the academic community can serve both the needs of students and the previously identified need for volunteer staff members of the house museum. Students from all fields of study can make a fit with the many areas of museum work. The wide variety of opportunities available will draw students of history, finance, marketing, communications, education, computer science, law, etc., to internships in historic museums. With the professionalism that has come to the museum field, students in this concentration will bring the addition of knowledge of the newest techniques and procedures and an eagerness to compliment their knowledge in a real world setting. The Small Museum Association promoted the use

of students in intern, work/study, or volunteer programs at a conference in 2006 (Burak, 2006).

One of the most difficult issues in a business situation to address successfully is to achieve “buy in” of the staff to new ideas. Tremendous effort is exerted by a company in the business community attempting to get its staff to accept change, no matter whether it is new technology, new work strategies, new leadership, or anything that interferes with the comfort level of individual job performance. The majority of the museum community has acknowledged and embraced the professionalism movement that has come to museum staffing with one exception, the small historic house museum.

The idea that a team atmosphere can be created between museum professionals and dedicated museum volunteers is a foreign concept for historic house museums that for many years avoided input from museum professionals. New channels of communication must be forged to reach out to these small museums in great need of assistance from museum organizations and they must be encouraged to accept it as help, not criticism or reproach.

In order to accomplish this, historic house museum trustees need to establish a more positive attitude toward the concept of reaching out for help. Less attention should be put on negative results and more attention put on positive results and goals. There must be an acknowledgement of the contribution and appreciation of all museum staff, salaried or volunteer. All workers in any field need to know that they are appreciated. Professionals should be invited in, on a regular basis, to speak with small museum staff about various museum subjects. This helps to humanize the professionals, who are often perceived as critical enemies of the lowly historic house museum in the hierarchy of

museum order. By establishing an on-going dialogue between museum organizations with these smaller institutions, there is hope for more acceptance and compliance of recommended standards and procedures. The learning will not only be one way. The museum community will also have better awareness of the unique difficulties inherent in housing museum collections in historic structures. When new documentation is introduced such as, The Collections Planning Guide, the purpose and specific value this guide will have for a house museum should be made clear to this segment of the museum community.

By the use of brainstorming sessions to gather new ideas, careful listening to the problems encountered by the museum staff, and the adoption of methods to get adequate feedback for any new methodologies in place, it is possible to change staff from thinking as an individual to thinking as a member of a team, all with the same common goal. Once the historic house museums embrace the concept of teamwork, equality, common goals, improved and open communication between museums, regardless of size, these house museums will have better tools with which to find solutions to old problems. The goal to attain is a change from an attitude of exclusion, to one of inclusion.

This movement from a work group, requiring a leader, to the new concept of team, indicating that all members are equals and work toward the attainment of a goal, should be embraced by all museums. This concept is already being promoted in European museums. It is being used by museums in various European countries as a tool to improve conservation. The educational materials prepared by the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property provides an excellent resource for encouraging staff buy-in. At the heart of this particular project is

the concept that in a museum, conservation is the responsibility of everyone. There are many current business philosophies that are adaptable to the non-profit organization. This is just one of them. If each museum began to think of itself as being only one part of the whole, rather than the whole, the entire museum community would benefit. Attitudes of resentment and distrust of museum professionals would be replaced by a willingness to share knowledge and resources (Appendix C).

With the beginning of a new century, preservation efforts are already beginning to protect structures from demolition that are representative of the last century. Much to the surprise of many, three sites, dating around the 1950s, are already being discussed for preservation. Although the preservation movement has not changed, the structural representations of the last century have. The three sites are the oldest existing McDonald's (1953); architect Edward Durell Stone's Stuart Pharmaceutical Factory (1958); and, the Las Vegas Strip (1941-present). If the trend to preserve commercial buildings in urban cities continues, the historic story of the 20<sup>th</sup> century will be very different from previous centuries. Based on current preservation activities, there will be no magnificent mansions, small farmhouses, cabins or schools preserved to depict the lifestyles of 20<sup>th</sup> century inhabitants. Preservation interests and focus have already changed and efforts are being made to more accurately depict the lifestyles and diversity of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

## CONCLUSION

The result of extensive research for this thesis supports my original premises. The AAM Collections Planning Guide can be of great value if used in the historic house museum setting. The writing and use of this planning guide would define all aspects of the collection, its contents, its objective and its goals. In addition, the planning guide would have a noticeable impact on other areas of museum operations and problematic situations unique to these museums. These museums would no longer hold collections that are more representative of the assortment of unrelated items found in grandma's attic than a quality museum collection exhibit.

In an effort to bring full understanding of the historic house museum and its difficulties, I included a history of the historic preservation movement, along with discussion of the overwhelming stresses and problems that are encountered by these small house museums. The difficulties of identifying the situations perpetuated internally by the organizational table used in the museum, or as a result of the preference to operate independently and isolated from the museum community were also addressed. The historic house museum community is reluctant and resistant to change and fail to recognize or accept the museum professionalism movement.

To improve a collection there must be intellectual framework to give control of the collection to the museum and to protect the collection from new interpretations with every change in staff. These interpretations are often based on personal preferences and perspectives.

Museum operation documents can be organized in the inverted triangle arrangement. Each document builds on top of another. The strongest, but usually the

smallest document, is the Mission Statement. It is brief, to the point, and gives the museum its purpose. The Mission Statement is broad in scope but contains a definitive clarity in setting forth the purpose and mission, of the museum. The Collections Planning Guide, written in agreement to the Mission Statement, defines the present collection, addresses the focus and vision of the collection and gives it life by outlining the future of the collection. The AAM recommends that the new, Collections Planning Guide be positioned right above the Mission Statement. The position of these two documents will provide the foundation for all the needed museum documents that will naturally evolve. The organizational triangle will continue growing higher and wider with the addition of the documents of museum operations.

One of the concepts taught in organizational communication is, without followers, one cannot be a leader. This concept can also be applied to a historic house museum. Without a collection, it is difficult for a historic house museum to be anything more than preservation of architecture. A Collections Planning Guide will bring objects out of the recesses of the attic and into the light of scrutiny, to produce a quality collection that is in agreement with the intent of the museum's mission statement.

In conclusion, the historic house museum is charged with being the keeper of our historic heritage and to provide public education through the use of material culture and an accurate historic story. This means that antiquated operation methods and failure to recognize important changes in the museum community and the museum visitor cannot be excuses for failing to initiate changes in collection stewardship, encouraging research to define the collection and attach future goals to it.

Change should not be considered something bad. Rather it should be looked as adjusting to new needs and solutions. This is evidenced by a proposal made by the International Council of Museums (ICOM) to change their definition of museum to "...to turn itself towards society and provide a simple but effective definition of a what museums *are, do* and *stand for* (Murphy, 2004)." ICOM, an international museum organization, has recognized that the current mission statement no longer defines the direction this organization is taking. The historic house community should follow the lead set by ICOM and broaden their scope of vision to address changes in visitor expectations, assume control and the direction for their collections, recognize their limitations and their unique appeal, and take steps to give our historic past a goal for the future.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bachmann, K. (Ed.). (1992). Conservation Concerns: A Guide for Collectors and Curators. Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Conn, S. (1998). Museums and American Intellectual Life, 1876-1926. Illinois: The University of Chicago Press.
- Donnelly, J. F., (Ed.). (2002). Interpreting Historic House Museums. California: AltaMira Press.
- French, W. L. & Bell Jr., C. H. (1999). Organizational Development: Behavioral Science Interventions for Organizational Improvement. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Gardner, J. B. & Merritt, E. E. (2004). The AAM Guide to Collections Planning. Washington DC: American Association of Museums.
- George, G. & Sherrill-Leo, C., (2004). Starting Right A Basic Guide to Museum Planning. California: AltaMira Press.
- Tubbs, S. L. (2001). A Systems Approach to Small Group Interaction. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Wallace, M. (1996). Mickey Mouse History and Other Essays on American History. Pennsylvania: Temple University Press.
- West, P. (1999). Domesticating History: The Political Origins of America's House Museums. Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Younghans-Butcher, S. (1993). Historic House Museums: A Practical Handbook for their Care, Preservation, & Management. New York: Oxford University Press.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

### **MAGAZINES**

**Chung, J. & May, T. (2005, Nov/Dec). X-tended family: attracting the post-boomer audience. Museum News. 54.**

### **JOURNALS**

**Elliott, J. D. (2002, Spring). Radical preservation: towards a new and more ancient paradigm. Forum Journal. 16 (3). 50-55.**

**George, G. (2002, Spring). Historic house museum malaise: a Conference considers what's wrong. Forum Journal. 16 (3). 12-19.**

**Moe, R (2002, Spring). Are there too many house museums? Forum Journal. 16 (3). 4-11.**

**Murphy, B.L. (2004). The definition of the museum—from specialist reference to social recognition and service. ICOM NEWS. 57 (2). 3.**

### **ARTICLES AND BULLETINS**

**Hart, J. & Merritt, E.E. (2005, January). A higher standard: the museum accreditation handbook 1 and 2. AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF MUSEUMS.**

**Hess, A. (1995). Preserving the recent past, hidden history, revealed landmarks. San Jose Mercury News.**

**Lee, A. J. (1988, April). Cultural diversity and historic preservation. CRM Bulletin-National Park Service 15 (7).**

**Trends, In with the old. (2006, January). AARP Bulletin 47 (1). 6.**

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

#### Journals Online

Appelbaum, B., "1994: Criteria for Treatment of Collections Housed In Historic Structures." JAIC ONLINE/Journal of the American Institute for Conservation 33 (2) Article 9 185-191.  
<http://aic.stanford.edu/jaia/articles/jaic33-02-009.html>  
accessed: March 29, 2006.

Boardman, K., "1997: Revisiting Living History: A Business, An Art, A Pleasure, An Education." ALHFAM ONLINE. The Association for Living History, Farm and Agricultural Museums Panel Discussion, May 3, 1997.  
<http://www.alhfam.org/whitepaper/alhfam.revisit.html>  
accessed: February 26, 2006.

Commoner, B., Eldridge, P., Hatchfield, P., Kruger, J., "2002 Position Paper On Conservation & Preservation in Collecting Institutions." AIC ONLINE. American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works.  
<http://aic.stanford.edu/about/coredocs/positionpaper.html>  
accessed: March 26, 2006.

#### Newspaper Articles Online

Clemetson, L., (December 6, 2005). History is Slipping Away as Collections Deteriorate, Report Says The New York Times [online].  
<http://nytimes.com/2005/12/06/arts.html>  
accessed: December 10, 2005.

Huxtable, A.L., (1965) Architectural Criteria. The New York Times  
<http://pbs.org/wnet/ny/series/huxtable.html>  
accessed: December 14, 2005.

Reif, R., (April 25, 1999) Art/Architecture: Correcting the Errors of a Benefactors's Ways. The New York Times [online].  
<http://travel2.nytimes.com/mem/travel/articles/printpage.html>  
accessed: August 10, 2004.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

**Barrmann, F., (July/August 1988) Details, Details: Successful Public Programming. Local History Notebook. The Ohio Historical Society.**

**<http://ohiosociety.com/resource/notebook/julaug1988.html>**

**accessed: September 21, 2005.**

**Child, Dr. M., (Leaflet 5). Collections Policies and Preservation. Northeast Document Conservation Center.**

**<http://www.nedcc.org/plan3/tleaf15.htm>**

**accessed: December 11, 2004.**

**Foster, M., (April 10, 2006) Congress Considers \$80 million for Katrina-Damaged Historic Properties. Preservation Online. The National Trust for Historic Preservation.**

**<http://www.nationaltrust.org/Magazine/archieves.html>**

**accessed April 18, 2006.**

**Implementing a Historic Furnishings Report. National Park Service US Department of the Interior, Harpers Ferry Center.**

**<http://nps.gov/hfc/products/furnish/furnish-object-hfr.htm>**

**accessed: February 26, 2006.**

**McCormick, V.E., (July/August 1993) Hard Choices about Lifestyles Interpretation. Local History Notebook. The Ohio Historical Society.**

**<http://www.ohiohistory.org/resource/notebook/julaug1993.html>**

**accessed August 15, 2004.**

**Rees, J., (December 4-5, 1998) Forever the Same, Forever Changing: The Dilemma Facing Historic Houses. American House Museums An Athenaeum of Philadelphia Symposium.**

**<http://www.philathenaeum.org/hmuseum/rees.htm>**

**Sanchis III, F.E., (December 4-5, 1998) Looking Back or Looking Forward? House Museums in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. American House Museums An Athenaeum of Philadelphia Symposium.**

**<http://www.philathenaeum.org/hmuseum/sanchis.htm>**

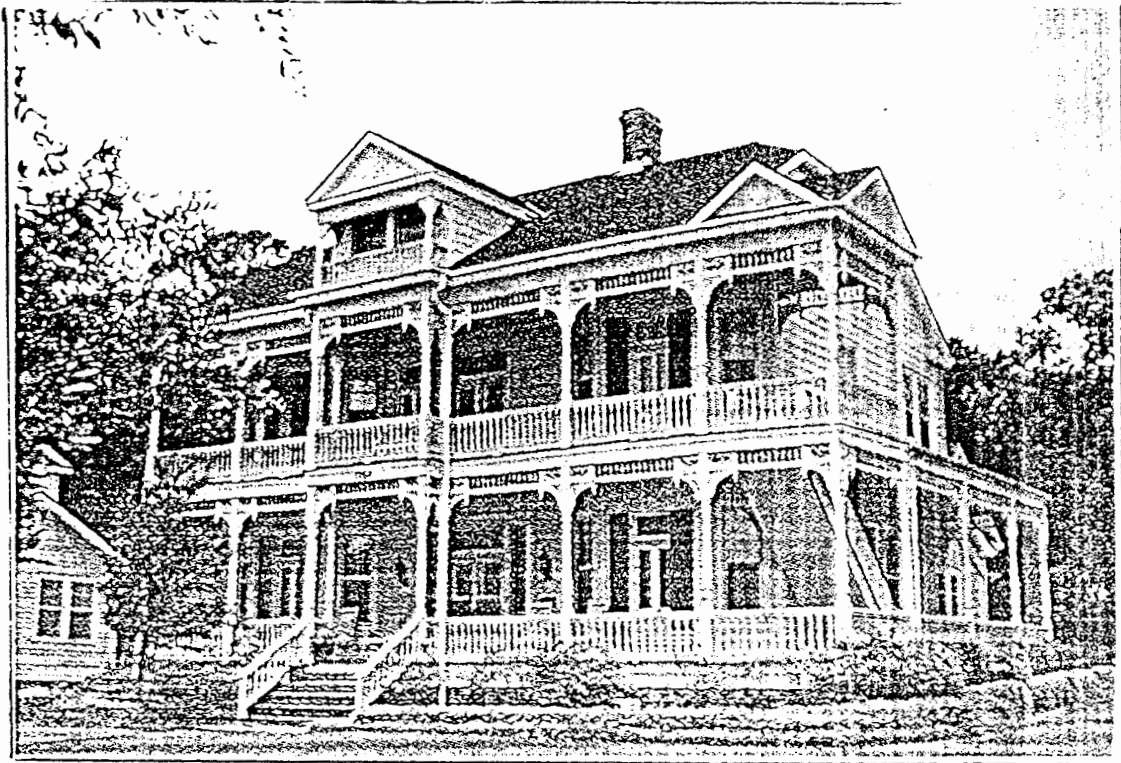
**accessed both: March 21, 2006.**

## **APPENDIX A**

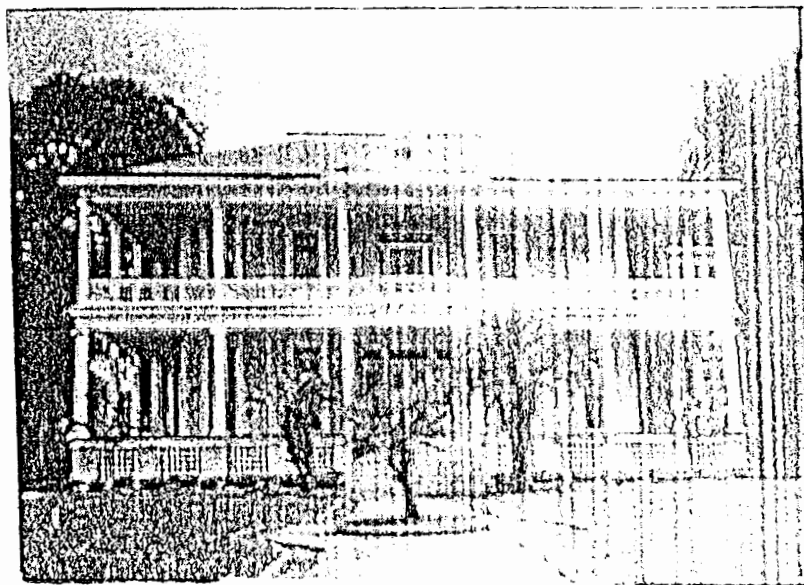
**EVIDENCE OF THE DAMAGE  
DONE BY HURRICANE KATRINA  
TO HISTORIC HOUSES  
IN THE SOUTH**

Original photographs by  
National Trust for Historic Preservation  
Accessed from their website

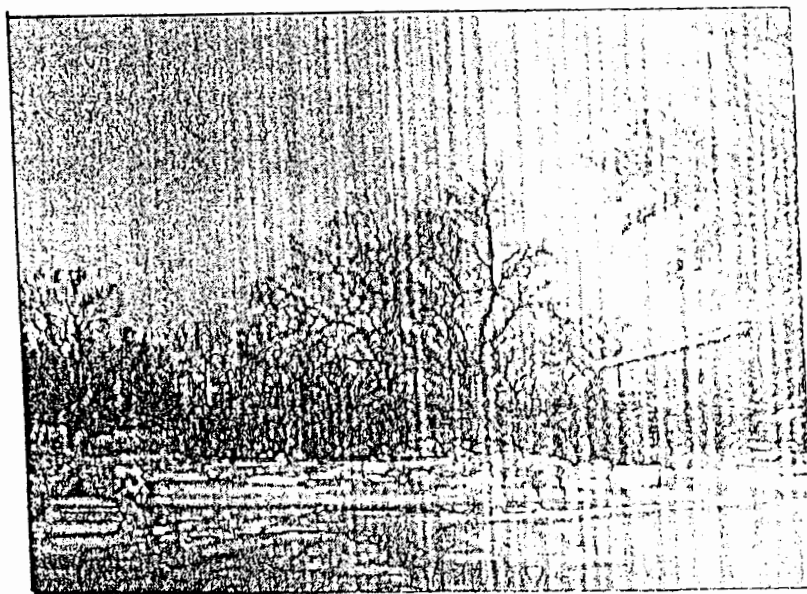
Photograph of a historic house in Biloxi completely destroyed by Hurricane Katrina



**Dantzler House Before Katrina.**



**Dantzler House used to stand on this site.**






## **APPENDIX B**

**Supplement given at  
AASLH 2005 Annual Conference**

**Sample Outline Form for a  
Collections Planning Guide**

1	Small Museums and Accreditation
2	Purpose of this Resource
3	How this Resource Works
4	How this Resource Works (continued)
5	What is AAM Accreditation?
6	What is the Accreditation Process?
7	What is the Accreditation Process ? (cont.)
8	What Are the Costs—Monetarily?
9	What Are the Costs—Time?
10	What Are the Benefits of Accreditation?
11	<b>What is a Small Museum?</b>
12	Small Museums Can Be Accredited!
13	Accreditation Program Standards
14	Two Core Questions
15	Characteristics of an Accreditable Museum
16	Accreditation Commission Expectations
17	There are Six Expectations
18	This Resource Contains
19	The Cover Sheet
20	The Self-Study Questionnaire
21	The Museum's Institutional Plan
22	The Visiting Committee Report

## What is a Small Museum?

- There is no “official definition”
  - At least 1/4 of the museums in the country have operating expenses under \$150,000
  - Museums represented in this resource have operating expenses ranging from \$100,000 to \$270,000
-  These museums are small enough to be effective models for any museum that meets the accreditation Eligibility Criteria.



## Small Museums Can Be Accredited!

- In Accreditation, a museum's performance is assessed relative to its circumstances
- Small museums achieve excellence by meeting the program standards in ways appropriate to their resources—
- Including their staff size and budget



## Two Core Questions

- How well does the museum achieve its stated mission and goals?
- How well does the museum's performance meet standards and best practices as they are generally understood in the museum field, as appropriate to its circumstances?



**Eligibility Criteria**  
To Participate in the AAM Accreditation Program

Approved by the Accreditation Commission on December 3, 2004

**Effective January 1, 2005**

**Eligibility Criteria**

To participate in the AAM Accreditation Program, a museum must:

- be a legally organized nonprofit institution or part of a nonprofit organization or government entity
- be essentially educational in nature
- have a formally stated and approved mission
- use and interpret objects and/or a site for the public presentation of regularly scheduled programs and exhibits
- have a formal and appropriate program of documentation, care, and use of collections and/or objects
- carry out the above functions primarily at a physical facility/site
- have been open to the public for at least two years
- be open to the public at least 1,000 hours a year
- have accessioned 80 percent of its permanent collection
- have at least one paid professional staff with museum knowledge and experience
- have a full-time director to whom authority is delegated for day-to-day operations
- have the financial resources sufficient to operate effectively
- demonstrate it meets the Characteristics of an Accreditable Museum

**Accreditation Program Standards:**

**Characteristics of an Accreditable Museum**

Approved by the Accreditation Commission on December 3, 2004

**Effective January 1, 2005**

**Public Trust and Accountability**

- The museum is a good steward of its resources held in the public trust.
- The museum identifies the communities it serves, and makes appropriate decisions in how it serves them.
- Regardless of its self-identified communities, the museum strives to be a good neighbor in its geographic area.
- The museum strives to be inclusive and offers opportunities for diverse participation.
- The museum asserts its public service role and places education at the center of that role.
- The museum demonstrates a commitment to providing the public with physical and intellectual access to the museum and its resources.
- The museum is committed to public accountability and is transparent in its mission and its operations.
- The museum complies with local, state, and federal laws, codes, and regulations applicable to its facilities, operations, and administration.

**Mission & Planning**

- The museum has a clear understanding of its mission and communicates why it exists and who benefits as a result of its efforts.
- All aspects of the museum's operations are integrated and focused on meeting its mission.
- The museum's governing authority and staff think and act strategically to acquire, develop, and allocate resources to advance the mission of the museum.
- The museum engages in ongoing and reflective institutional planning that includes involvement of its audiences and community.
- The museum establishes measures of success and uses them to evaluate and adjust its activities.

*Continued*

### **Leadership & Organizational Structure**

- The governance, staff, and volunteer structures and processes effectively advance the museum's mission.
- The governing authority, staff, and volunteers have a clear and shared understanding of their roles and responsibilities.
- The governing authority, staff, and volunteers legally, ethically, and effectively carry out their responsibilities.
- The composition, qualifications, and diversity of the museum's leadership, staff, and volunteers enable it to carry out the museum's mission and goals.
- There is a clear and formal division of responsibilities between the governing authority and any group that supports the museum, whether separately incorporated or operating within the museum or its parent organization.

### **Collections Stewardship**

- The museum owns, exhibits, or uses collections that are appropriate to its mission.
- The museum legally, ethically, and effectively manages, documents, cares for, and uses the collections.
- The museum's collections-related research is conducted according to appropriate scholarly standards.
- The museum strategically plans for the use and development of its collections.
- Guided by its mission, the museum provides public access to its collections while ensuring their preservation.

### **Education and Interpretation**

- The museum clearly states its overall educational goals, philosophy, and messages, and demonstrates that its activities are in alignment with them.
- The museum understands the characteristics and needs of its existing and potential audiences and uses this understanding to inform its interpretation.
- The museum's interpretative content is based on appropriate research.
- Museums conducting primary research do so according to scholarly standards.
- The museum uses techniques, technologies, and methods appropriate to its educational goals, content, audiences, and resources.
- The museum presents accurate and appropriate content for each of its audiences.
- The museum demonstrates consistent high quality in its interpretive activities.
- The museum assesses the effectiveness of its interpretive activities and uses those results to plan and improve its activities.

### **Financial Stability**

- The museum legally, ethically, and responsibly acquires, manages, and allocates its financial resources in a way that advances its mission.
- The museum operates in a fiscally responsible manner that promotes its long-term sustainability.



### **Facilities & Risk Management**

- The museum allocates its space and uses its facilities to meet the needs of the collections, audience, and staff.
- The museum has appropriate measures to ensure the safety and security of people, its collections and/or objects, and the facilities it owns or uses.
- The museum has an effective program for the care and long-term maintenance of its facilities.
- The museum is clean and well-maintained, and provides for the visitors' needs.
- The museum takes appropriate measures to protect itself against potential risk and loss.

## **Saying No: Effective Collections Policies** **by Stephen Patrick**

*Your ability to control eager potential donors is only as good as your policies. Effective documents make the difference! Find out how to start strategizing your collections policies.*

### **I. Planning documents and their efficient use**

A. Mission Statement

B. Vision Statement

C. By-laws

D. Collections policy

1. Sub-policies

a. Loans

b. Photography request and permission

c. Loan Agreement form and policy

d. Acknowledgement of Gift letter and Declining an Offer letter

2. Collections Management - organize first! 3x5 cards or computer - both work

E. Collections plan - long range planning for effective acquisition, care and use

F. Furnishing plan / Exhibit script

G. Strategic or Long-Range Plan

### **II. Resources**

A. Cultural Resources, National Park Service:

<http://www.cr.nps.gov/museum/>

B. American Association of Museums Information Center:

<http://www.aam-us.org/museumresources/ic/index.cfm>

C. American Association for State and Local History Technical Leaflets:

## **APPENDIX C**

**ICCROM'S PROJECT  
TEAMWORK FOR PREVENTIVE CONSERVATION  
SELECTED PAGES 1 - 13**

Teamwork  
for  
Preventive  
Conservation

NEAL PUTT AND SARAH SLADE

# Preface

Every day, museum collections are placed at risk. The causes of damage include light, unstable temperature and relative humidity, pests, pollutants, poor storage and display mounts and poor handling. They are also placed at risk by the threat of disasters including floods, fire, and the impact of war and natural disasters.

These risks can only be minimised if there is a common understanding of the problems that exist, and the long-term benefits to the museum if they are addressed. This requires awareness, on the part of each staff member, of how the work that they do might affect the condition of the collection. This awareness gives staff the scope to directly improve the care of the collection.

All types of staff are involved. The work of engineers and architects directly affects the environmental conditions and levels of natural light in the buildings. The materials designers select for constructing exhibit cases determine levels of pollutants and their work is critical in determining the levels of artificial light.

Decisions on holding public events in museums affect decisions on risk assessment and these decisions in turn impact on the work of security guards who protect the collection against damage from the public. Staff working in public entertainment and education can instil the importance of preserving heritage in visitors. Decisions made by managers impact on all of these areas and more. Finally, there is the day-to-day work the curator does with the collection, and in institutions that employ them, the care that conservator-restorers provide.

The actions of everyone within the museum will affect the condition of the collection to some degree, in either a negative or a positive way. A multi-disciplinary approach to preventive conservation is needed to ensure that these effects are positive. This requires the implementation of teamwork into museums.

The approach to introducing teamwork to improve preventive conservation in museums advocated in this document is based on the experiences of eleven museums from nine European countries that took part in ICCROM's Teamwork for Preventive Conservation Project.

The document contains a suggested framework for planning and team-development, as well as highlighting methods for developing networks among museums and other institutes to provide additional support for preventive conservation.

Neal Putt and Sarah Slade

# Contents

Preface .....	V
<b>1. Why Teamwork for Preventive Conservation.....</b>	<b>1</b>
A Multi-disciplinary Approach .....	1
The Essentials of a Team.....	1
This Guide – Models and Experiences .....	2
Teamwork for Preventive Conservation Framework.....	2
Participating Museums .....	2
<b>2. Getting Started: The First Sparks .....</b>	<b>3</b>
Building Participation and Respect.....	3
Who to Involve.....	4
Directors: A Key Element .....	4
Who Guides the Process? .....	5
Are Outside Advisors or Partners Necessary?.....	5
<b>3. Building Participation: Agreeing on a Vision and Identifying Key Issues .....</b>	<b>8</b>
A Shared Vision.....	8
The Director's Role .....	9
The Planning Group's Role .....	9
Lectures and Guest Speakers.....	10
Visits to Other Museums .....	11
Brain-Storming and Small Group Tasks .....	11
Writing a vision for preventive conservation .....	11
Broadening the vision of who is involved in preventive conservation.....	12
Bringing new ideas (and old problems) into the open	12
Identifying risks to the collection. ....	12
Identifying key issues to address.....	12
ICCROM Preventive Conservation Indicators.....	12
<b>4. Targeting Preventive Conservation: Assessments and Writing Objectives .....</b>	<b>14</b>
From Issues to Objectives .....	14
Assessment Methods .....	14
Working Groups .....	15
All-staff Risk Assessments .....	15
Central Committees and Teams .....	15
Individual Research .....	16
Consultants' Reports.....	16
Standards and Benchmarks .....	16
Assessment Models.....	17
Writing Clear Objectives .....	17

5. Building Teams and Keeping on Track.....	18
Principles of Teamwork .....	18
Identify outcomes .....	18
<i>Determine team structure</i> .....	18
<i>Determine reporting system</i> .....	18
<i>Specify resources and team authority</i> .....	18
<i>Determine training and information needs</i> .....	19
Identifying Outcomes .....	19
Determining Team Structure .....	19
Deciding on the number of teams .....	19
Choosing Team Members .....	20
The Team Leader.....	21
Determining the Reporting System.....	21
Specifying Resources and Team Authority .....	22
Determining Training and Information Needs.....	22
Troubleshooting .....	23
Monitoring Progress and Achieving Success .....	24
6. Building Preventive Conservation Networks .....	25
Further Reading: A Basic Preventive Conservation Library ..	29
Appendix A: Museums in ICCROM's Teamwork for Preventive Conservation Project .....	35
Appendix B: ICCROM Preventive Conservation Indicators .	38
Appendix C: Examples of Key Issues and Objectives .....	48



# 1 Why Teamwork for Preventive Conservation

## A Multi-disciplinary Approach

*Preventive conservation is no longer considered as a conservator's obsession but everyone's professional duty.*

National Museum of Folk Arts and Traditions,  
France

The aim of preventive conservation is to reduce the deterioration and maintain the integrity of museum collections in an affordable manner, and to ensure their availability to society now and in the future.<sup>1</sup>

Improved collections care is not just an aim in itself, but needs to be achieved in a way that enables increased public access to the collection.

The tasks are so broad that they are impossible to do in isolation. They require the awareness and involvement of everyone in the museum, a multi-disciplinary approach to preventive conservation that can be achieved through teamwork.

*We were unanimous in recognising that teamwork permits museum personnel to meet each other, to reassert their ties, to create a dynamic. I discovered people and I have easier contacts now, more frequently, with people with whom I had not previously had any professional rapport.*

National Museum of Folk Arts and Traditions,

## The Essentials of a Team

Teamwork shifts responsibility for an area of work from one person to a group of people. In the case of preventive conservation, teamwork brings together all staff whose work impacts on the collection and its care. In bringing these people together, teamwork:

- focuses all the knowledge and skills that are available on the issue.
- allows the planning to be done by the people who will do the work.
- encourages the efficient use of funds and staff, minimising added costs.

No two museums will implement teamwork in the same way. Staff sizes range from less than 10 personnel up to 600. Collections range from 400 works of art to 300,000 natural history specimens to 500 automobiles, aeroplanes and trains. Facilities range from small wooden houses to stone castles to multi-million dollar showplaces. The work culture within each museum will be different. Teams in a regimental museum in the Netherlands will not be the same as teams in a national museum in Fiji or a village museum in Canada.



Lone Crusader

*The team structure ... encouraged dialogue and co-operation in the area of preventive conservation to an extent not previously seen. It proved helpful for staff to recognise that the problems they face are, more often than not, shared and are by no means unique to a particular staff grouping or discipline.*

Ulster Museum



Shared Responsibility

Although each museum will implement teamwork in a different way, the essentials of a team will remain the same. All teams need a clear realistic aim and the visible on-going support of the museum's Director and Administration. Teams need to be made up of representatives from all the key areas of the museum and be given the authority to determine what the issues are and how to address them. Finally, teams need to be given the resources necessary to see these recommendations are followed through and achieve real outcomes.

When implemented and supported in this manner, teamwork allows people to change, to compromise and to share approaches. It sets achievable objectives and establishes successful work habits.

### **This Guide – Models and Experiences**

This guide outlines an approach to introducing teamwork to improve preventive conservation in museums. It is based on the experiences of eleven museums from nine European countries that took part in ICCROM's Teamwork for Preventive Conservation Project. This project, started in 1994, involved staff from the 11 participatory museums and drew on the support of 14 conservation advisory services. The project gradually perfected the methods and developed consensus on the approach.

This guide presents a five-step framework for planning and team-development, and methods for developing networks among museums and other institutes to provide additional support for improvements in preventive conservation.

### **Teamwork for Preventive Conservation Framework**

This framework is based on the experiences of project participants and their thoughts and observations are provided throughout the publication. Summary information about the participating museums is provided in Appendix A.

### **Participating Museums**

Municipal Museum 'Vander Kelen-Mertens', Leuven, Belgium  
 Czech National Museum  
 National Museum of Folk Arts and Traditions, France  
 Museum of Ethnography, Hungary  
 Brescia Civic Museum of Natural Science, Italy  
 National Museum of Archaeology (Ferrara), Italy  
 Royal Netherlands Army and Arms Museum  
 National Museum of Ancient Art, Portugal  
 Barcelona Museum of Contemporary Art, Spain  
 Ulster Museum, United Kingdom  
 Birmingham Museums & Art Gallery, United Kingdom

<p><b>Step 1 Getting Started</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine who to involve in the project</li> <li>• Appoint Preventive Conservation Planning Group</li> </ul> <p><b>Step 2 Building Participation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a shared vision for preventive conservation</li> <li>• Identify key issues to be addressed</li> </ul> <p><b>Step 3 Targeting Preventive Conservation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake detailed assessments of the collection</li> <li>• Write verifiable preventive conservation objectives</li> </ul> <p><b>Step 4 Building Teams and Keeping on Track</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create preventive conservation teams</li> <li>• Identify levels of authority</li> <li>• Allocate resources</li> <li>• Monitor progress, problems and success</li> </ul> <p><b>Step 5 Building Preventive Conservation Networks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create support networks within the museum profession</li> <li>• Develop projects to gain public involvement and support</li> </ul>
---

## 2 Getting Started: The First Sparks

### Building Participation and Respect

*The achievements we reached can convince other museums: for decades there were ideas only about these kinds of developments! The ideas were the same, but the activities did not follow them! Changing the way of thinking about them is the most important thing!*

Museum of Ethnography, Hungary

*Participation in 'Teamwork' permitted validation of preventive conservation actions among the ensemble of personnel. It was able to create a permanent dialogue. The personnel have not forgotten this period where, for the first time, meetings gathered all levels of staff and allowed the most 'humble' to offer contributions and criticisms.*

National Museum of Folk Arts and Traditions,  
France



Ideas

The crucial first step to introducing Teamwork for Preventive Conservation is building a spirit of participation among staff members. Attitude is as important as plans and resources.

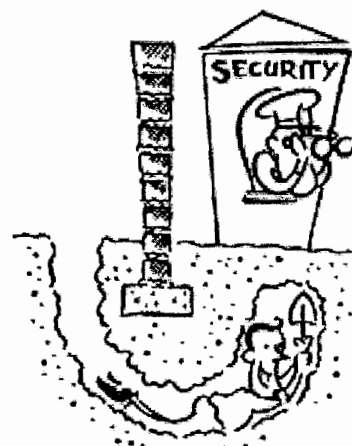
The decision to introduce a teamwork approach to preventive conservation gives the issue a higher profile, as the Administration singles preventive conservation out for particular attention. If this process is managed well, it can create a renewed respect for the collections and awareness in all staff of the part that they can play in its care.

Eliciting commitment and co-operation is the initial aim. The museum's Administration should start the process by bringing all of the staff together. In the framework of the ICCROM project, this consultation process essentially took place in two stages or workshops. The organisation of these workshops is discussed in detail in Chapters 3 and 4.

During these workshops, staff:

- acknowledge and validate their respective experience and recognise the importance of the actions that they carry out on a regular basis
- identify the museum's long-standing problems in the area of preventive conservation
- elicit creative ways to tackle the problems and ideas for new directions

The workshops must be designed to encourage co-operation, to resolve well-known problems and open up avenues to new approaches. The benefits of participation and respect will last long after the first objectives are completed. They are the single most important result of



Open Communication

*Interestingly, the perception was that the staff most responsible for creating this spirit were the janitorial, maintenance and security staff, those, in other words, who had traditionally played a marginal role in working towards fulfilment of the museum's mission and who suddenly realised that their input was being sought out, valued, and quoted.*

Barcelona Museum of Contemporary Art

*Team planning contributed to a change in the way of thinking, and part of that was a change away from seeing only the lack of money. The Administration and staff established new structures and habits of communicating and working together. They began a series of achievements based on small changes in the use of people and resources. An essential first step was a workshop of a committee of a cross-section of personnel, which created awareness and gave everyone the opportunity to make their own suggestions for good collections management.*

Museum of Ethnography, Hungary

*What seems essential is the art of placing value on the ground-level actions that are often issues of good sense. This draws attention to the importance of these acts.*

National Museum of Folk Arts and Traditions,

*The project did indeed create a spirit of participation ... In the first place, during ... the preliminary meeting at the museum in 1999 conservators and registrars spoke about the merits and demerits of the level of preventive conservation at the moment. The sense that every department struggled with more or less the same problems resulted in a high-spirited mood in which people were willing to act immediately.*

Royal Netherlands Army and Arms Museum

*In the long term it is clear that the entirety of personnel has not completely transformed its state of spirit but the concept of preventive conservation is today indispensable and it allows faster decisions and transforms some bad habits. Preventive conservation is no longer considered a conservator's obsession but everyone's professional duty.*

National Museum of Folk Arts and Traditions,

introducing this project into the museum.

Museums that have implemented Teamwork report that the keys to building staff participation and spirit are:

- participation of all the staff during early stages of analysis and planning
- punctual follow-through from the formation of the teams to their starting work and achieving results
- commitment of the senior Administration
- contact and co-operation with other institutions.<sup>2</sup>

Most professional staff within museums feel that preventive conservation is a serious issue that is important to address. This provides an existing commitment to the work of the team. The importance of this as a starting point can not be underestimated.

### Who to Involve

The key questions that need to be asked when deciding who to involve in the initial workshops are:

- Who are the people who actually handle the collections (scientists, curators, conservator-restorers, technicians)?
- Who are the people who create the physical environment for the collection (architects, engineers, cleaners, security staff)?
- Who are the people who create the administrative and human environment within the museum (Directors, financial officers, public events planners, education officers)?

Another useful question is "Who are the contributors 'outside' the museum?" Several museums that have implemented Teamwork for Preventive Conservation have drawn in professionals who are not strictly part of the staff. Some museums have a regular relationship with architects or engineers who are part of another government institute. Others have a long-standing relationship with volunteers, or education and public event specialists outside the museum. If the "outside" individuals have a regular and defined rapport with the museum, they can be important contributors and should be included in the initial workshops.

Ideally, everyone identified by these questions should be involved in the very early stages of team planning. In practical terms, experience shows that the maximum size for workshops to develop a vision for preventive conservation, identify key issues and determine objectives is between 20 to 40 personnel. Museums with larger numbers of staff usually call on a selected sub-group of staff for the intensive planning workshops, composed of a mixture of department heads and other delegates. They have used seminars, training events, site visits and study days to inform other staff of the process being carried out.

### Directors: A Key Element

Commitment from the museum's senior Administration is essential to the success of the Teamwork approach to preventive conservation. Senior Administration means the Director, but also usually includes senior curators, financial administrators, board members and government officers above the level of the Director.

*I can't stress enough the value that Teamwork for Preventive Conservation has for instilling amongst staff a sense of belonging, and shared concerns. The end realisation that they are all cultural custodians, carrying a social service, makes them carry out their respective responsibilities with pride.*

Barcelona Museum of Contemporary Art

*The most interesting technique for promoting teamwork was certainly the fact that all museum personnel participated in an early workshop, from guardians to maintenance personnel to scientific collaborators. Preventive conservation on every level of museum practice was talked about.*

Leuven Municipal Museum

*Without the support of the Administration, these projects are difficult to realise because they need full and complete participation. If the Administration puts the accent on the importance of this mission and also contributes to making attitudes evolve, the project has a formidable common denominator that opens the doors of inter-professional communication.*

National Museum of Folk Arts and Traditions,  
France

*One of the most important elements of the project was the involvement of Directors and senior managers. Irrespective of how preventive conservation is undertaken within a museum, it is clear that support at this high level is essential if progress is to be made.*

Ulster Museum



The Game Plan



The Director leads the charge

The idea for starting Teamwork for Preventive Conservation might originate from anywhere in the museum, but only the senior Administration has the authority to initiate it. The Director and the Administration must demonstrate their own interest and commitment from the outset, in order for other staff to give it their respect. The Director has to have a key role in the first meetings or workshop to give the necessary high profile to the Teamwork initiative. At the first meetings the staff have to be assured that after planning, action will ensue. At the same time, the Administration has to ensure that staff expectations fall within what is realistically achievable.

As Teamwork for Preventive Conservation proceeds, there must be strong rapport between teams and senior Administration, with a structure for reporting and decision-making. Ultimately, only the Administration can authorise new ways of working together, changes in staff time and the identification of resources to meet new goals. Both the staff and Administration must have confidence in the team and satisfaction with its progress.

### Who Guides the Process?

A small group of people will need to work together regularly to lead and implement Teamwork for Preventive Conservation. The maximum number on this Planning Group should be 10 people, even in large museums.

The role of the Planning Group is to:

- organise the two initial workshops and all associated meetings
- set the schedule of steps for implementing Teamwork
- choose consultants or outside advisors, if necessary
- develop any partnerships with other museums or institutes

The museum Director need not necessarily be part of the Planning Group, and another staff member often serves best as the co-ordinator or Leader.

Chapter 5 provides detailed information on choosing team members and other tips and considerations for creating and maintaining a successful Planning Group and avoiding common pitfalls.

### Are Outside Advisors or Partners Necessary?

The museums that have implemented Teamwork for Preventive Conservation all agree that contact with outside professionals and institutes help build commitment and change attitudes. Contacts can



*Breath of Fresh Air*

*The involvement of external advisers was undoubtedly the most beneficial aspect. A 'neutral' voice will always speak much louder than one with a vested interest. They also offered a source of advice and encouragement and acted as 'sounding boards' when needed. ... Adherence to timetables and deadlines was facilitated by staff awareness of their overseeing role.*

Ulster Museum

range from advisory or consulting services by a single professional, to co-operation agreements with other museums and institutes.

The Planning Group needs to determine whether the museum needs technical advice in preventive conservation, or advice to facilitate workshops and consultation with staff, or both.

The Planning Group should ask:

- Does the museum need technical and scientific information about preventive conservation? Does it have enough preventive conservation expertise to conduct its own assessment of the current state of affairs?<sup>3</sup>
- Does the museum need expertise in planning and implementing workshops and in drawing out participation from all the staff? Does the Planning Team feel capable of independently organising all staff workshops and planning events?
- Is the museum in a position to hire a consultant or advisor, or would it be possible to obtain free assistance from a national institute or university?
- Is it possible to work in tandem on the Teamwork project with one or more other museums, exchanging experts between the museums and using other forms of co-operation?
- Does the museum want to develop co-operation in areas such as training, public programmes, advisory services or disaster preparedness teams?
- Does the museum want to use alliances with other museum and institutes to raise government or public support for preventive conservation?

The answers to these questions will determine the skills and knowledge to look for and whether to work with a single professional or whether to develop a broader-scale partnership or alliance with other museums and institutions.

Whatever the functions and skills of outside advisors, their impartiality will assist in developing communications.

The Czech National Museum used external professionals and partner institutions throughout the Teamwork project. To start, the museum organised a one-day seminar for all staff. Guest speakers and conservator-restorers from other professional spheres and institutions formed the most successful feature of the event. The information and experience they brought was new and beneficial for all the museum participants. The workshop reinforced the importance and significance of preventive conservation care. The Workshop included visits to two other museums. A scientist from a national conservation institute continued as a technical advisor during a series of subsequent assessment and planning meetings. Several of the participants from the Workshop eventually assisted in editing a basic training manual in preventive conservation. Mutual co-operation when preparing the manual, workshop and professional excursions helped to create a spirit of participation. The external advisors and colleagues from the other institutions contributed their broad experience and unbiased criteria to the conservation initiatives.

The Museum of Ethnography in Budapest chose two advisors who provided a mixture of preventive conservation and teamwork experience. The advisors assisted the staff to select assessment methods and survey the storage and exhibition rooms. They made suggestions of how to solve problems, provided bibliographies and references, and coached and advised on the initial workshops. The museum also developed an exchange programme with museums in the Netherlands.

*The external advisors had obviously tested the process elsewhere and were familiar with some of the reticence it would face amongst the staff; this reticence was overcome by these advisors with surprising ease.*

The Director  
Barcelona Museum of Contemporary Art

*The external advisors helped assess the conservation needs and led the workshops with all the staff. They had techniques of involving everyone that were very new to the museum. They were a big part of our success with getting respect and participation from outside the museum. We organised a well-publicised one-day meeting on preventive conservation with the advisors, participants from the city government, Ministry of Culture, Superintendence of Archaeology and museum representatives from other regions of our nation. This helped plan an outreach project to schools in our neighbourhood and assemble a committee. It also helped get funding for some storage problems in the museum and build up our co-operation with the regional superintendence of culture, which is our main source of conservation advice and assistance.*

Participating museum

Discussing the same problems, seeing the solutions, results, and getting in touch with colleagues in other institutions was very useful.

The Barcelona Museum of Contemporary Art used advisors primarily for their ability to facilitate a teamwork approach, not for their knowledge of preventive conservation.

Museum Directors gain as much as staff from co-operation and contact between institutions. In addition, museum Directors may be able to use the prestige of outside advisors to gain support for the museum's objectives. One of the participant museums in the Teamwork project used the participation of outside expert advisors to attract significant attention to the museum.

Whatever the role and source of outside advisors and partners, the parameters of the co-operation must be clear. The museum Planning Group and the advisor or partner(s) must:

- discuss and agree on the aims and context of working together
- specify clear objectives, schedules and responsibilities for all parties
- confirm the agreement in writing
- hold to the agreement or renegotiate it if it is no longer appropriate or further elements of co-operation are justified.

At the end of this first step in the Teamwork process the Preventive Conservation Planning Group should have been established and be aware of the importance of engaging all staff in the work ahead.



A shared vision

*Instead of thinking "object" think "collection".  
Instead of thinking "room" think "building".  
Instead of thinking "individual" think "team".  
Instead of thinking "short term" think "long term".  
Instead of thinking "professionals" think "public".  
Instead of thinking "trade secrets" think  
"communications".  
Instead of thinking "how" think "why".*

From the opening address by Gael de Guichen  
for a Workshop at the National Museum of  
Folk Arts and Traditions, France:

*Preventive Conservation is the economical means  
to prevent damage and preserve the real objects. It  
takes the constant application of common sense,  
science and practice by all staff in all areas.*

Statement by the Director, following a  
Workshop at the National Museum of Ancient

*Our goal is to preserve our collections for  
future generations: systematically evaluating  
risks, identifying needs and forming a plan for  
prevention. All staff and administrative officials  
are involved, working in teams and with the  
public.*

From a Workshop group at Birmingham  
Museums & Art Gallery, United Kingdom

*The aim of preventive conservation is to reduce  
the deterioration and maintain the integrity of  
museum collections in an affordable manner and  
to ensure their availability to society now and in  
the future.*

Definition by a Workshop of Directors from  
seven museums, organised by ICCROM.

### 3 Building Participation: Agreeing on a Vision and Identifying Key Issues

#### A Shared Vision

A shared vision<sup>4</sup> is essential to ensuring that everyone in the museum is working towards the same goals. The second step to Teamwork is the development of a shared vision for preventive conservation, and the identification of the key issues that need to be addressed to achieve this vision. These are the themes of the first Workshop.

The four key issues to explore during this Workshop are:

- What are the risks to the collections?
- What potential actions can reduce these risks?
- How will the process be improved by co-operation and planning?
- What are the benefits to the museum and its public if collections care is improved and collections made more accessible?

The term preventive conservation has been used for 30 years and almost everyone in the museum will be aware of some of the measures taken to protect the collection. Some people will have been directly involved in certain tasks. It is unlikely, however, that everyone will have a shared view of what risks and responsibilities are involved. It is more likely that either:

- a small number of staff in the museum have a high level of knowledge about preventive conservation, but it is not shared throughout the organisation, or
- museum staff have very little or no knowledge of preventive conservation

By covering each of the four key issues, all staff, regardless of their existing level of knowledge, will be able to reach a common base of understanding.

Both the vision of preventive conservation and the key issues that need to be addressed should be formalised in writing by the end of the workshop. Debating and approving a written statement ensures that everyone has the same understanding of the vision and the key issues.

At the end of the first Workshop the museum's staff should have:

- a common and long-lasting vision for preventive conservation that they can refer to and share with future staff
- a list of agreed issues for action that will form the basis of a mid-term preventive conservation plan

The vision for preventive conservation needs to be specific to each museum. It should be written as a short statement that imparts the importance of preventive conservation for the collections, and the need to implement it in a way that enables increased access to the collection, now and in the future.



### **The Director's Role**

As highlighted in Chapter 2, commitment from the museum's senior Administration is essential to the success of the Teamwork approach to preventive conservation. The Director must make one of the opening presentations at the workshop, explaining why the museum has decided to focus on preventive conservation and adopt a teamwork approach. The Director's personal commitment is critical to the development of the entire staff's vision.

The museum's Administration also needs to provide staff with the framework for the Teamwork project. The presentation should convey the Administration's commitment to assigning the responsibilities and resources needed to undertake the project. It should also outline the timeframe within which results will be visible throughout the museum.

### **The Planning Group's Role**

It is the role of the Planning Group, appointed in Step 1, to organise the workshop. They should use the criteria outlined in Chapter 2 to identify who will be involved in the workshop, either as a presenter or as an attendee. This includes the identification of museum staff and any external advisors that may be required.

The Planning Group should also determine what workshop format would be most effective for their museum. The workshop is being held to promote participation, draw out the staff's existing knowledge and create a base of understanding throughout the museum, so that a shared vision for preventive conservation can be developed.<sup>5</sup> The format for the core of the workshop needs to encourage open communication. It should include techniques like brainstorming and small group work.

Short lectures can be incorporated for the sections of the workshop that are designed to impart information or update the existing knowledge of the staff.<sup>6</sup> Information gathering techniques (such as visits to other museums) can be incorporated during, before or after the workshop, to illustrate problems or present possible solutions that have been implemented in other institutions.

The decisions about what combination of techniques would best suit each museum will be influenced by the:

- size and structure of the museum
- number of people to be included
- existing staff culture
- museum's experience in organising staff meetings and brainstorming.

Museums with large staff numbers or complex staff structures can organise special sessions for all staff, while a smaller group, representative of all of the key areas in the museum, will be involved in the Workshop. Large open sessions are especially useful for the presentation by the Director, to announce the project, to inform on actions and time schedules, to report on results and to provide general information and knowledge. For large open sessions, lectures are the most appropriate communication technique.

The experience of the museums that participated in ICCROM's Teamwork for Preventive Conservation project indicates that whatever the format, the first Workshop should take a minimum of one day and a maximum of two days.



*A Shared Starting Point*

### Lectures and Guest Speakers

All staff need to have the opportunity to learn about current approaches to preventive conservation, regardless of their existing levels of knowledge. In this way, everyone starts on a shared footing. Even professional conservator-restorers need to continue to adopt new ideas, attitudes and technical approaches.

Lectures can be useful in museums where:

- the majority of staff members have a limited understanding of the techniques and benefits of preventive conservation
- only a small number of staff have had the opportunity for mid-career training in preventive conservation
- staff responsibilities are separated and hierarchical

If teamwork is a new management technique, there can be a risk that its relatively informal style will seem improper. The Planning Group might want to initiate the process with a lecture that will provide a fairly formal learning environment and prepares people for the move to more informal discussions and exchange.

Guest speakers can be used successfully to inform the museum staff of current approaches to preventive conservation. In museums that have a conservation section, both their conservator-restorers and guest speakers should be involved. The involvement of the museum's conservators-restorers right from the beginning of the Teamwork process includes them in the transition from preventive conservation being their sole responsibility to one that is the responsibility of a multi-disciplinary team.

The involvement of guest speakers helps reduce the risk of the staff feeling that the museum's conservator-restorers are the sole authorities on preventive conservation. This is important in ensuring that staff feel comfortable participating openly in the Workshop and in the on-going Teamwork for Preventive Conservation process.

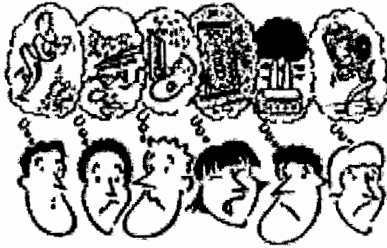
Guest speakers are most effective when they can talk about real situations in museums, rather than just theory. They should include case studies and examples of actual problems and solutions. It may be useful for them to discuss some of the problems with the staff prior to the Workshop, to provide information pertinent to the museum. If this is the case, the Planning Group should organise an advance visit by the guest speakers or advisors, to enable them to familiarise themselves with the situation in the museum.

During the Teamwork for Preventive Conservation project, the Brescia Civic Museum of Natural Science found that the most important contribution to the start of the Teamwork approach was a discussion between external conservators and the internal staff about the general problems of preventive conservation.

A mixture of external and internal specialists was successfully used by the Czech National Museum. In this museum, an initial study day was held where approximately 50 museum staff met with the conservator-restorers from their own museum, as well as some of the most active researchers and practical innovators from other professional spheres and institutions in the country. Lectures were given by the museum's Administration staff, its conservators, and by guest speakers.

*In the Teamwork for Preventive Conservation project, the Czech National Museum followed up the first Workshop with staff visits to two other museums that had demonstrated cost-effective and resourceful approaches to preventive conservation.*

Czech National Museum



Identifying Risks

### Visits to Other Museums

This approach provides an open environment for informal discussions between staff from different professions. It promotes long-term links outside the museum and provides contacts with future sources of advice and training. Seeing successes elsewhere can be very inspiring. Staff can see highly practical ideas to apply in their museum.

### Brain-Storming and Small Group Tasks

The Planning Group should organise the workshop in a way that stimulates communication, self-expression, problem solving and creativity. Workshop techniques that require individual participation ensure that everyone's knowledge is included and participants have the satisfaction of contributing their point of view, suggestions and concerns. Long-standing problems are frequently identified. This is an excellent result, but also one that must be kept under control to avoid returning to old conflicts and rigidity. The workshop should be structured so that everyone has the chance to speak up, but no one has the opportunity to monopolise. The natural reserve of some individuals should be respected, but should not prevent them from participating.

Brainstorming and group work, incorporating a mixture of written work and discussions, function very well in producing the vision and key issues for preventive conservation in the museum.

Asking each person to write a few words ensures that everyone participates. Discussion then allows the braver individuals and natural leaders to speak more fully and lead the group to completion of a task. Reporting back from small groups in writing ensures that the task is completed according to specifications and that the results are available for immediate use and future reference. These tasks familiarise staff with future roles as team members, in liaising with the Administration and as active participants.

During the Teamwork for Preventive Conservation project participating museums found the following techniques successful:

#### *Writing a vision for preventive conservation*

- Every participant in the workshop writes two or three key words on a card to answer the question: "What does preventive conservation mean to you?"
- The cards are gathered at the front of the workshop and one or two facilitators (perhaps assisted by several workshop participants) quickly sort them into rough groups. The facilitators encourage discussion between the participants to help collate the comments meaningfully.
- The workshop is then broken up into a maximum of three or four small groups. Each has a short time to produce a definition or vision statement of a maximum length (say 50 words). The small groups then report back to the entire workshop.
- The Planning Group, or any assigned workshop reporters from each group, meet briefly to complete a single draft statement, which is reported back to the entire workshop, and discussed before final agreement on wording.

***Broadening the vision of who is involved in preventive conservation***

- Individuals identify the different staff positions that take part in preventive conservation, either orally or in writing. A facilitator moderates, summarises and comments on the discussion, encouraging wide participation.
- This task can be adapted to the museum's needs by using variations of the question given to the participants: What staff positions already take part in preventive conservation? Which staff positions could assume a role? Who is involved in preventive conservation 'inside' the museum? Who is involved, or could be involved, from 'outside' the museum (architects, advisors, specialised technical services, museum visitors, children, funding agencies, government representatives)?

***Bringing new ideas (and old problems) into the open***

- All the workshop participants write one or two cards that answer a question such as: What are the two greatest problems related to preventive conservation that you encounter in your day-to-day work?
- Facilitators gather the cards and sort them roughly into groups, encouraging discussion from all the participants.
- The results are used as the basis of further work to define and agree upon the key issues to address.

***Identifying risks to the collection.***

- Small groups are asked to identify the risks of damage to the collection, based on their personal experience. Each small group is assigned a different area: risks arising from a museum function (exhibits, storage, transport and handling, building management) or risks arising from particular sources (light, incorrect temperature and relative humidity, fire, flood, theft, vandalism, insect pests, etc.).
- The small groups use cards to record their discussion and report back to the entire workshop to assemble the overall picture of risks. Each group must provide a verbal commentary on the meaning of their findings.

***Identifying key issues to address***

- All the workshop participants write one or two cards that state (within a word limit) the key issues that they feel should be addressed.
- Facilitators gather and sort the cards into groups, using help from all the participants.
- The entire workshop agrees on a maximum of four to six key issues.
- This exercise leads well into small group work to describe the issues more clearly and to add background explanations. The workshop participants can volunteer for the group and the issue that interests them most, as long as they agree to approach the issue in a positive way.

The facilitators should clarify that the participants in the small groups will not necessarily become team members assigned to that issue.

***ICCROM Preventive Conservation Indicators***

The ICCROM Preventive Conservation Indicators are a tool designed to assist staff to identify the main preventive conservation

issues that face their museum (refer to Appendix B). They also assist to broaden the vision of staff because they provoke discussion about a wide range of issues.

The Indicators are 35 questions with yes/no answers, divided into seven topics:

- 1 Constitutional framework of the museum
  - 2 Finance and Plans
  - 3 Personnel and Teams
  - 4 Collection
  - 5 Building
  - 6 Environment
  - 7 Public Involvement
- To encourage discussion, a large workshop should be broken down into groups with a maximum of 10 members. Each group should include a cross-section of professions and employees, such as administrative officers, curators, exhibit designers, technicians, architects, security personnel, guides and staff for educational services and public events.
  - Answering the questions will promote considerable debate. Each group should appoint a workshop recorder to note the answers and comments of the group. After completing all of the questions, each group should identify three to six key issues, generated by the discussion of all the Indicators. The chart at the end of the Indicators helps summarise the group's conclusions.
  - Workshop recorders then report back to the entire workshop summarising their analysis and giving a short synopsis of the four to six key issues that they feel the museum should address by taking a Teamwork approach to preventive conservation. The workshop participants discuss the lists from each group and determine what the final key issues are for the museum.

Whichever combination of the techniques covered in this chapter is used, at the end of the first Workshop the staff should have:

- developed a shared vision of preventive conservation for the museum
- identified the key issues that need to be addressed to achieve this vision

The Preventive Conservation Planning Group should then consult with the museum Administration to ensure their agreement with the vision and key issues, and then report the approved results to the entire staff.

The museum can now start the following step in the Teamwork for Preventive Conservation process – developing objectives to address the key issues that have been identified.

## **APPENDIX D**

**VARIOUS STATISTICAL INFORMATION  
COMPILED BY THE HERITAGE PRESERVATION  
THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR CONSERVATION  
COLLECTION ASSESSMENT PROGRAM 2004**

# Heritage Preservation

*The National Institute for Conservation*

President	Lawrence L. Reger
Director, Collections Care Programs	Clare Bouton Hansen
Coordinator, Conservation Assessment Program	Rory House
Editor	Diane L. Mossholder

Heritage Preservation has for over a quarter-century been the leading advocate for ensuring the preservation of America's heritage, including works of art, books, documents, film and video, historic objects, architecture, artifacts, and natural science specimens, for present and future generations.

Heritage Preservation works with its members to inform the public of the role of museums, libraries, archives, and historic preservation groups in preserving our collective heritage, and to provide information on how to care for family heirlooms. Heritage Preservation assists its diverse membership by identifying preservation needs, initiating projects, and implementing solutions.

For more information about Heritage Preservation programs and activities, contact:

Heritage Preservation  
1625 K Street, NW  
Suite 700  
Washington, DC 20006  
202-634-1422; fax 202-634-1435  
[www.heritagepreservation.org](http://www.heritagepreservation.org)

Heritage Preservation receives funding from the National Park Service, Department of the Interior. However, the content and opinions contained in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of the Interior.

©2004 Heritage Preservation, Inc.



Fig. 3.1 Heritage Health Index Respondents

Archives	2%
Public Library	23%
Academic Library	9%
Independent Research Library	1%
Special Library	7%
Historical Society	11%
Historic House/Site	5%
History Museum	11%
Art Museum	6%
Children's Museum	0.04%
Natural History Museum	2%
Science/Technology Museum	1%
General Museum	3%
Specialized Museum	5%
Archaeological Repository	1%
Scientific Research Collection	3%
Arboretum/Botanical Garden	1%
Aquarium	0.02%
Nature Center	1%
Planetarium	0%
Zoo	1%

Fig. 3.2 Representation by Specific Type of Institution

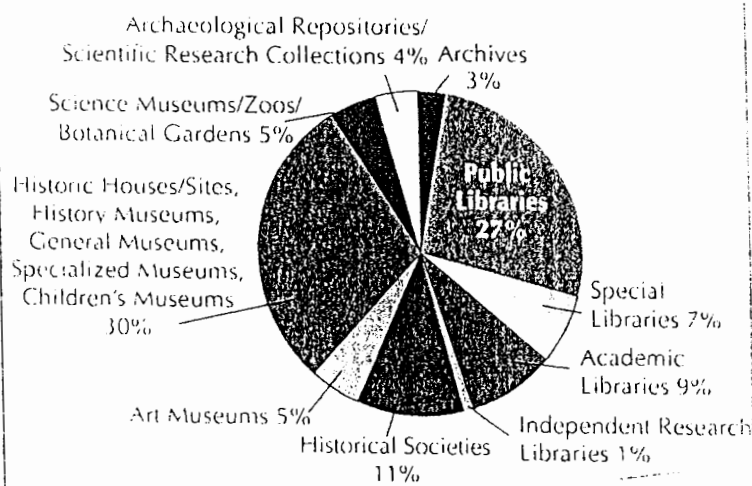


Fig. 3.3 Representation by Type of Institution



Fig. 4.2 Collections Held by U.S. Institutions  
(by type)

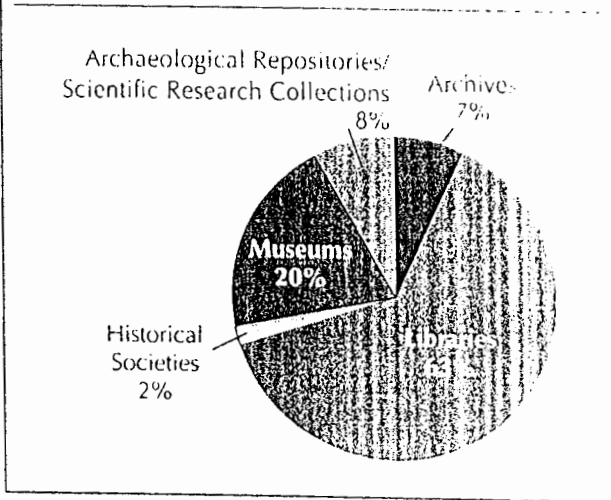


Fig. 3.6 Average Staff Size (by type)

	Full-time paid staff	Part-time paid staff	Full-time unpaid staff	Part-time unpaid staff
Archives	8	3	0	4
Libraries	14	9	0	4
Historical Societies	2	2	0	14
Museums	10	7	0	34
Archaeological Repositories/ Scientific Research Collections	3	2	0	3

Fig. 6.2 Institutions' Collections Stored in Areas Large Enough to Accommodate Them Safely and Appropriately (by type)

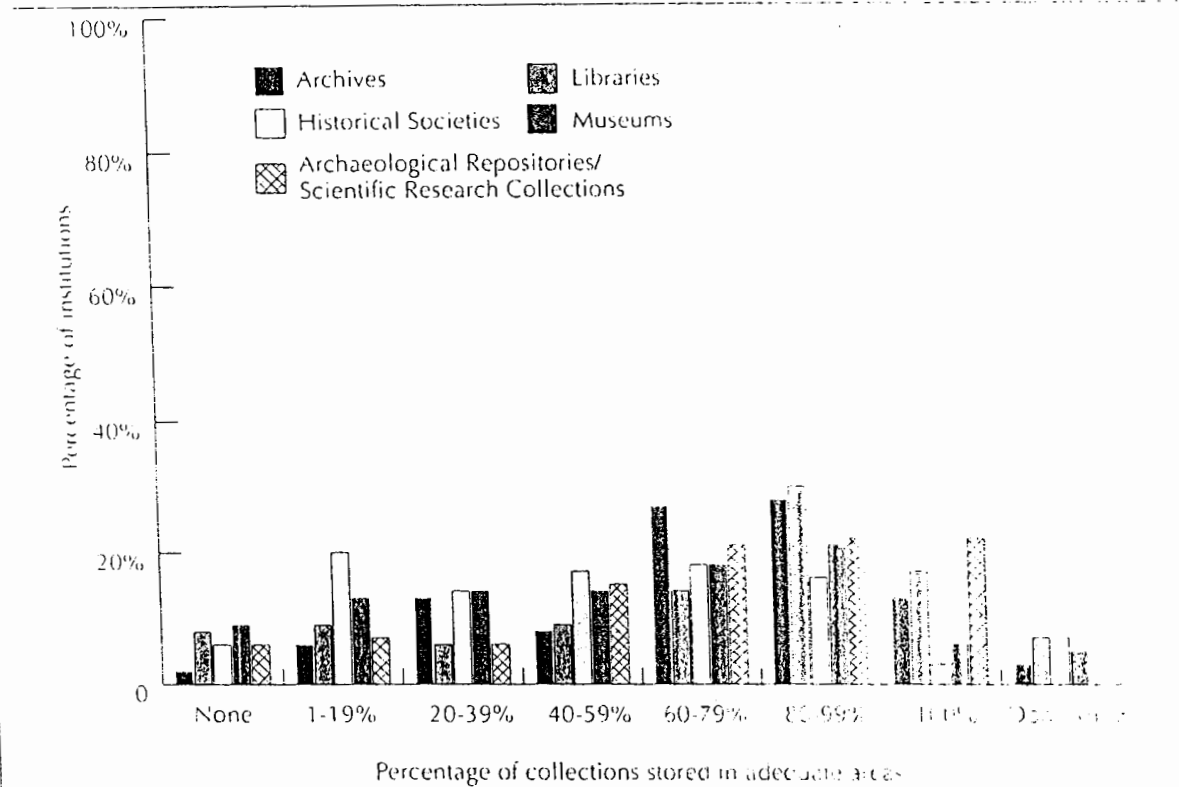


Fig. 6.3 Institutions' Collections Stored in Areas Large Enough to Accommodate Them Safely and Appropriately (by size)

